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The Sounds of Silence; Or, Isabella's Counter Discourse in *Measure for Measure*

by

Gina Vivona

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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## Introduction:

### I Hope Here Be Truths; Or, The Measure Of My Argument

In William Shakespeare's problem play, *Measure for Measure*, early modern vexations about gendered rhetoric are acknowledged head on. In the patriarchal culture of England, men feared eloquent women because female possession of discourse was equated with female control over the body – or what Judith Butler refers to as the physical “container” of a voice. Such autonomy heightens the reality of sexual freedom, and simultaneously intensifies the masculine nervousness regarding cuckoldry. My argument will strive to focus on the masculine fears linking gendered voice and gendered body to social consequences of those anxieties – poor reputation and public punishment. Viennese punishment in *Measure* is not a sign of absolute law; rather, it is a subjective, malleable concept enforced by the absolute authority of a tyrannous leader.

Duke Vincentio's attempts to regain control of Vienna become a harsh critique of patriarchal systems and the men who sit at the top of them. Although the Duke's words ultimately possess the highest power, it is also important to recognize that his specific speech is a problematic site of authority because he operates as the biggest trickster of language: his words are rooted in deception and remove the opportunity for verbal consent; whether asserting his power through forced marriages in public or plotting bed tricks in private, the Duke's commands are an attempt to regain control through the regulation of bodies. I suggest that the Duke's long-term neglect of law and then temporary abdication of power is the root of a broken society, but also that physical estrangement and slander among the people are an extension of his political corruption. In the first section of this argument I highlight the ways that language is used to reduce whole bodies to separated parts, these verbal and physical fragmentations endorse the fact that the people of *Measure* live in a society where unregulated sexuality leads to inescapable physical exploitation, resulting in a complete loss

of female honor, or the ability to maintain chastity, and male honor, or the protection of female chastity through legal marriage. The second portion of this argument will focus on the way that the Duke uses marriage as a form of forced punishment to bring separated bodies back together. His irrefutable commands highlight his tyrannical power, but further allude to the illusion of subjectivity that is generated through speech because his subjects do not undoubtedly respect or obey him.

Christina Luckyj's work, *A Moving Rhetoric: Gender and Silence in Early Modern England*, examines gendered, rhetorical impacts of patriarchal control, and her ideas bolster my claim that speech is not necessarily powerful and that silence is not a direct mark of compliance. I will use her idea as a touchstone throughout this paper to emphasize the inversion of Westernized philosophies which often associate speech and agency, and silence and erasure. She proposes, "If speech bears traces not of personal agency but of institutional constraint, are the men who can speak freer than the women who keep silent? If discourse is a site of the most insidious, internalized social controls, might silence offer a rival, less highly regulated space?" (5). I will unpack masculine language to reveal that it exploits women and reinforces "insidious" abuse toward the female body – which drives Isabella's use of silence as protection and freedom from the patriarchy. Despite the fact that Isabella first uses powerful words to expose and defy corrupt leadership, her rhetoric also renders her vulnerable to Luckyj's suggestion of masculine "internalized social controls." Once Isabella returns to Vienna, her voice represents her intellectual ideas and criticisms, yet it is also "borrowed" by Claudio and Lucio to seduce Angelo and manipulated by the Duke to serve his own goals. Through Isabella's linguistic artistry yet also her verbal dutifulness, we experience the waxing and waning of power triggered by speech.

In *The History of Sexuality Volume One*, Michel Foucault captures this complex verbal struggle:

Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are...discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (101)

Foucault's claim is an important one because it acknowledges the fact that speech is a potential mark of individual agency and "transmission" of power, but also as Luckyj suggests, it is a "hindrance" to that same power source because it creates the opportunity for expressions of rebellion or disloyalty. In the third section of my argument, I analyze how the Duke, Claudio, and Lucio require Isabella's speech to exploit her body; they successfully set her up to "thwart" her own discursive power through speech, or by placing her moving mouth (a physical, penetrable bodily space) in front of Angelo. I do not imply that Isabella's discourse is weak by any means – I believe it is consistently powerful throughout the play – but I do emphasize that masculine tendency to "undermine" and sexualize her words incites her to return to silence as an "opposing strategy."

Isabella's speech, specifically her transition from strong discourse to defiant silence, is integrally tied to her choice to resist and disrupt social controls including the evasion of homogenous, heterosexual bodily expectations (i.e. marriage, motherhood, or whoredom). Despite her short stay in Vienna, Isabella interrogates social regulations that place women in the center of domestic households, and that invert "appropriate" patriarchal spaces for the female body to exist. I believe Isabella's silence is the key ingredient that confuses the monitored binaries of duty and desire, law and violence, and honor and shame, and ultimately proves that women possessed the power to step beyond the parameters dictated by early modern patriarchal culture.

To reveal the magnitude of the gendered, patriarchal fear that surrounds the female voice and form, I want to first draw attention to the concept of the corporeal body as a comprehensive body politic. As previously mentioned, societal fears of the early modern era

– including shameful slander, cuckoldry, and exile – were manifested and transcribed onto all impressionable, physical bodies via speech. In order to get to the heart of Isabella’s exceptional rhetoric, which includes her discourse and therefore physical mouth, it is necessary to slice into the form of social punishment, and furthermore, dissect the concept of tangible, public shame. When a “marked” body is considered a social signifier, or a coded layer of asomatous discourse, it becomes a powerful site of visible, gendered anxiety. Within the tumultuous landscape of Vienna, the Duke inflicts public punishment on bodies that uses shame as a method of social control to help reinforce lines of gender – which include structured relationships between sovereign and subject as well as husband and wife – as a manipulation of secular law that restores a failed patriarchal order, and lastly, as an attempt to serve justice to those who “deserve it.”

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault declares that punishment is ineffective without the presence of the physical body, and I use his idea to emphasize my point that Isabella’s choice to remove herself from Vienna (through silence and a return to the nunnery) is the most efficient way to escape tyrannical abuse and torture.

He writes:

But we can surely accept the general proposition that, in our societies, the systems of punishment are to be situated in a certain ‘political economy’ of the body: even if they do not make use of violent or bloody punishment, even when they use ‘lenient’ methods involving confinement or correction, it is always the body that is at issue – the body and its forces, their utility and docility, their distribution and submission. (25)

Foucault’s explanation suggests that if a person is part of “our society” (I interpret this as any form of “community”) full ownership of one’s body is surrendered to the control and/or the power of the political ruler. In order for the Duke to “correct” his people, he requires their corporeal compliance, cooperation, and “docility.” Foucault goes on to explain that one of the main purposes of torture is to cure a criminal by reflecting the violence of the original crime back onto the individual’s body. He also reasons that because law is an extension of a

sovereign's body, the sovereign possesses the power to publically harm criminals in the same way that they broke the law.

Despite the fact that Foucault's ideas of discipline are targeted for people who live in the modern industrial age (i.e. occupying roles in the military, factories, or classrooms) his ideas are equally applicable and effective within *Measure* because the Duke's "system of punishment," or in this case marriage, is used as a "complex social function" and "political tactic" (Foucault 23) to regulate and limit the widespread sexual activity of his subjects. The Duke's "distribution and submission" of bodies becomes torturous when it is committed publicly, for all to see. Foucault further explains that this concept of visibility merges the body of a criminal with the subjective mark or power of the ruler and reinforces his previous idea that power and the body are inseparable. Foucault further asserts that:

[Torture] assured the articulation of the written on the oral, the secret on the public, the procedure of investigation on the operation of the confession; it made it possible to reproduce the crime on the visible body of the criminal; in the same horror, the crime had to be manifested and annulled. It also made the body of the condemned man the place where the vengeance of the sovereign was applied, the anchoring point for a manifestation of power, an opportunity of affirming the dissymmetry of forces. (55)

Although the Duke does not use torture to impress physical violence (i.e. whipping, waterboarding, etc.) onto the body, I argue that he instead uses marriage as an "anchoring point" to neutralize the previous sexual exploitations of Angelo and Lucio. The Duke publically marries them off to Mariana and Kate Keepdown – an exiled, dishonored woman and a prostitute – and as a consequence that brands their reputations as shameful, insubordinate bachelors who once disobeyed power. But marriage to wronged women also becomes a "reproduction" yet "annulment" of their own crimes: Lucio's promiscuity is "the same horror" as marrying a whore (or a promiscuous woman), and Angelo's attempts to damage Isabella's chastity is pardoned through the repair of his broken vow to Mariana.



The Duke uses bodies as a canvas to reaffirm his dominance, and therefore, demonstrates Foucault's ideas that power is inseparable from the body and discourse. Punishment is enforced according to the Duke's own personal motivations (or where he thinks bodies should be), and as a result of the play's last scene it is safe to claim that applications of "law" in Vienna are a commentary on Foucault's concept of "punishment-as-spectacle" (9) – or the use of torturous public shame to spread fear. And the disgrace of forced discipline, specifically cuckoldry, is terrifying. Unfortunately, the Duke has disregarded Vienna's "strict statutes and most biting laws" (1.3.19) for 14 years, so he is far removed from judicial/political discipline.

If law is an extension of a ruler, we can assume that lawlessness arises due to lack of rule, which provides some psychological connections between the Duke and his political negligence. Before he can become a credible leader again, he must find a way to make the law relevant so he can awaken the sleeping concept of punishment that reconnects his physical body to discipline. According to Foucault, it is only through public punishment (and a corporeal site to inscribe punishment) that relinquished power is renewed. From this light, it is more understandable that the Duke schemes to bring his subjects physically closer together through marriage because it confirms that his commands were obeyed, and affirms that he has control over his people.

I will invest this time in punishment and language to inspect how social "norms" or rather "abnorms," are inflicted on the body, but more importantly, to prove that Isabella is the only character who disengages her figure from continued abuse. She takes initiative to reposition her body so that it becomes untouchable. Once she exists outside the patriarchal "zone" of control (a space riddled with dysfunction), she reestablishes and restores her individual self-agency, including her own objectives. Finally, I will examine social fears regarding gendered bodies (specifically related to sexuality and autonomy) from three

platforms 1) virginity and pregnancy 2) the tongue 3) intercourse, and highlight the ways that Isabella exempts herself from the repercussions of those fears. I lay out the treatment and fear surrounding the gendered body to establish a realistic and robust baseline for what Isabella is up against, or whom she has to physically and emotionally resist. I will argue that whenever Isabella exudes control over her own voice and body, she ignites feelings of uncontrollability and fear in her male counterparts. But more effectively, she utilizes her silence as counter discourse to nullify masculine fear of her strong speech, and escape a tyrannous patriarchal system that relies not only on her verbal compliance but also her physical subjugation.

### Section 1:

#### But I Do Bend My Speech; Or, Political Corruption as Fragmented Nation & Broken Body

In *Measure for Measure* the corporeal body is placed at the forefront of the stage, and becomes a site of social, economic, and political fragmentation in Vienna. Readers learn that Vienna suffers from an absence of limitations. Without a leader to enforce existing laws in place – and to hold individuals accountable for breaking those laws – any credibility, fear, and respect for order evaporates. As a result, uncontrollable and lawless physical abuse spawns everywhere; hyper-sexuality infuses itself on to everybody within the city. Citizens of Vienna are regarded and categorized by their physical status, only to be further weakened and reduced by the public ridicule of bodily appearance. The Duke informs Escalus that he will remove himself from the spotlight and abdicate his power to Angelo. Immediately, the audience is dragged into a corporeal liminal environment, the shuffling of bodies – Angelo’s for the Duke’s – is the first sign that Vienna will remain in flux due to a series calculated decisions.

The Duke becomes a linguistic chameleon and feigns a rollercoaster of emotions that shift depending on his audience. When he speaks to Angelo he utilizes flattery to gain the trust and stroke the ego of a man who prioritizes honor and moral characteristics. He confidently explains that Angelo's leadership should be shared with the community because his "soul seems good" (1.1.66). After, he discusses his abdication with the town Friar and embraces a tone of guilt and self-loathing that is misconstrued as a heartfelt confession. He tells the Friar he is ashamed of his leniency with the people, yet ironically moments before, he instructs and encourages Angelo to lead through a series of *choices* – "Mortality *and* mercy in Vienna / Live in thy tongue, and heart" (*italics mine*, 1.1.44-45). These quick switches between sentiments reveal that the Duke's motivation is to grant Angelo too much freedom, so he can assign punishment for an abuse of that power:

Sith 'twas my fault to give the people scope,  
 'Twould be my tyranny to strike and gall them,  
 For what I bid them do...I have on Angelo impos'd the office,  
 Who may in th' ambush of my name strike home,  
 and yet my nature never in the fight to do in slander. (1.3.34-37; 40-43)

The Duke's lines reveal that he prefers to be a temporary cipher, hiding in disguise while another man sets cultural "examples" in his name. The Duke knows that Angelo will be socially ambushed or mocked in the attempt to suddenly represent authority. He claims that his physical separation from Vienna is a safer approach because he will not be involved in any definitive fighting, but his plan is really a prioritization and protection of his own reputation from social judgments. Furthermore, the Duke admits that it would be tyrannous to punish another for his own ideas, yet as seen from the last act, he contradicts himself when he "strikes" Angelo with the bed-trick and shameful marriage. So Angelo is first solicited to rule, in whatever style he deems fit, but then is held accountable for the "choices" that were thrust and imposed upon him. By the end of the first act it is plausible to suggest that the Duke's intent is to create additional chaos through Angelo's transgressions so he can

intervene, reassume power with an unstained name, and then make an example out of the man who once had power. The Duke further conveys manipulation and an alternate agenda when he says, “Hence shall we see / If power change purpose, what our seemers be” (53-54), which insinuates that he wants to test the extent of Angelo’s morals. Not only does he put himself in a safe position where he can observe Angelo from afar and gather information about his past and current behavior, but the Duke also uses that information to showcase his ability to obliterate Angelo’s reputation.

The Duke’s language is often filled with double meanings throughout the play, reminding us that his own heart (intentions) and tongue (words) are two separate entities with different agendas. For example, he describes Escalus as pregnant, insinuating that his character is full of substantial wisdom and leadership, “For common justice, y’are as pregnant in / As art and practice hath enriched any / That we remember” (1.1.11-13). Once again, he uses flattery to subdue the corruption behind his true plans, and I argue that Escalus’ incorruptible nature and political experience is why the Duke overlooks him and chooses Angelo instead – he monopolizes on political and sexual inexperience to reactivate his own power. I also believe that the Duke’s use of “pregnant” further divides a gendered body politic. Whereas pregnant is used as an incongruous compliment to describe a man, it is also used as a reference of shame to describe women (i.e. Juliet and Kate Keepdown). The word lays the foundation for continued, public discussion of the sexualized female *appearance* (i.e. skin, face, and belly) and adds dramatic impact to the public knowledge of Juliet’s private sexual relationship with Claudio.

The Duke is aware that Vienna needs restructuring; he builds upon his mention of pregnancy and compares the nation to an unruly child that disobeys its caretaker, “And Liberty plucks Justice by the nose; / The baby beats the nurse, and quite athwart goes all decorum” (1.3.29-31). Now, the aftermath of pregnancy is used to mock Vienna’s political

face and reduce it to an exposed “nose” susceptible to invasive abuse. At first, this line seems to be a continuation of too much freedom, but it also represents charged historical anxieties regarding succession. *Measure* was written in 1604, the same year that James I formally took over the throne from Queen Elizabeth, and for at least a decade before this, there was a cultural worry about the future of the country (as well as individual positions, wealth, and so on) when the childless Elizabeth died – an event that could have occurred at any time. A violent political struggle was possible, and Shakespeare addressed the question of harmful leadership through a fractured body politic (Hampton-Reeves 10). The Duke’s own state of bachelorhood, his complaisance, and his sudden disappearance create a world of abused bodies, but it is new, inexperienced leadership that brings more disorder and discontent to the people.

Similar to the way that the Duke abandons his authority, Angelo and Lucio abandon domestic obligations to women that they intend to betroth or impregnate. Although I will come back to this point later on, it is worth mentioning now because the Duke’s treatment of his nation is equivalent to the masculine treatment of the feminine body, solidifying the idea that land and inhabitants are used to represent each other. In *Measure*, it is leadership – or lack of leadership – that determines the prioritization, marginalization, and compartmentalization of bodies. The body, then, is greater than “surface,” and transcends to a visual map or representative site of “social norms, practice, and values” (Grosz 138) that depict a leader’s rule.

The Duke’s choice to replace his body with Angelo’s is a mental projection of his inability to endure judgment or properly lead, as well as his tendency to resort to deception and temporary physical replacements to solve social challenges. *Measure* is invested in a series of interchanged bodies that exemplify the Duke’s tendency to shuffle people like interchangeable props, thus highlighting the fact that he chooses to hide behind the actions of

others while he simultaneously facilitates their punishments. In order to keep his own body and reputation protected, he coordinates Claudio's head trick by ordering the Provost to replace Barnardine's head with Ragozine's; and he orchestrates Angelo's bed trick by convincing Isabella and Mariana to swap identities, thus suggesting that all female bodies are the same. In a society where unchaste women are rejected, or deemed unmarriageable, chaste women are forced to succumb to the rules of men as well. Obviously, the bed trick would never have come to fruition without the Duke, and this highlights the idea that the vulnerability of women increases under patriarchal authority. But, it also emphasizes the fact that leadership is only as effective as a subject's willingness to participate in submission. Although the Duke does not literally "strike and gall" his subjects, he uses the exchange of female bodies to provoke masculine sexuality and social ruin.

The Duke's method of replacement is a symbol of his tyrannous leadership style and becomes a "social norm" because Angelo mimics it as well. While the Duke exchanges bodies, one for the other, Angelo repositions them, or asks for an exchange of physical favors (I consider this a critique of the *Duke's* character because his power is heightened whenever Angelo commits misdemeanors throughout his temporary rule). Angelo further divides disoriented groups of people because his punishments separate and uproot bodies: Claudio's imprisonment and planned death removes him from society and drags Isabella's concealed body out of the nunnery; Juliet's pregnant body transitions from Vienna to concealment, and her loss of virginity must be settled with Claudio's head or replaced with Isabella's maidenhead (Evelt 148). Although Angelo initiated these shifts, every exchanged, replaced, or removed body is a result of the Duke's decision, since Angelo's power was his doing. Whereas Angelo repositions bodies in the attempt to reinstate law and assign immediate punishment (however harsh it may be), the Duke's exchange of bodies is more tyrannous because he exploits them with the intent to tempt and provoke increased misbehavior.

Therefore, social dysfunction is not resolved, but instead worsened, through the replacement of authority. Angelo succumbs to the counterfeit invincibility of his position, and demonstrates that power transforms even the most “good” men. And Angelo’s forced marriage becomes the most dramatic exchange because his reduction from honorable man, to disrespected leader, to shamed subject is the biggest fall from grace; his position of command is removed as quickly as it was instated, and he must once again follow orders instead of giving them.

For Foucault, questions of the body are conjoined with the questions of power. He explains that power affects the body, both physically and behaviorally, and creates a more docile person. Furthermore, the docile body develops through increased and altered control – including focus from a whole body to individual body parts. As he puts it, docile bodies “may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault 136). In order to understand the Duke’s tyrannous conduct, we must focus not only on the removal of his body to watch others, but also on the ways that he maneuvers/controls other bodies to mark them as sites of “vengeance” or control. Despite his disappearance, it is evident that the Duke considers the extension of his rule as an extension of himself. Before Angelo makes his first appearance, the Duke says to Escalus:

What figure of us, think you, he will bear?  
 For you must know, we have with special soul  
 Elected him our absence to supply  
 Lent him our terror, drest him with our love  
 And given his deputation all the organs  
 Of our own power. (1.1.16-21)

By utilizing “figure,” “drest,” and “organs,” the Duke uses discourse that connects his body and his inferior’s body. Once he emphasizes their similar, tangible characteristics, it is easier to justify the transference of his “divine” responsibilities. Furthermore, those references insinuate that corporeal surfaces act as impressionable terrain or prioritized space that adopt political changes through physical movement and verbal reassignment.

The shift of power embodied via “organ” is also reflected through the shift of pronoun utilized in the aforementioned lines. The Duke says “our” three times to draw references to his body and therefore possession of his social command, and then explains that the breadth of his power has been transferred to Angelo (i.e. “thy”). Such relocation or “transformation” of power is inseparable from a new anatomy. Angelo’s fragmented organs (or the Duke’s focus on individual body parts) – “Mortality and mercy in Vienna / Live in thy tongue, and heart” (1.1.44-45) – are representations of the Duke’s delegation of authority to control the community and to determine the continued existence of individual figures as well. “Tongue” is associated with the power to sentence people to death, whereas “heart” represents the choice to pardon another life through mercy.

Angelo reciprocates the understanding of this bodily transference of power when he says, “Let there be some more test made of my metal, / Before so noble and so great a figure / Be stamp’d upon it” (1.1. 47-49). Furthermore, he insists that his body should undergo another “test” to measure his character, to embody and personify the previous “figure” of the Duke, and his overall readiness to lead a nation. The verb “stamp’d” is essential since it implies that hierarchal power and/or status is worn and visible, like stepping into a new set of garments. Once Angelo wears the “sign” it is as if his new position is firmly pressed or engraved onto his flesh; his newly marked figure becomes a transactional seal of approval, or physical rite of passage representing a heightened, adjusted, or – as Foucault describes – “improved” figure.

After acknowledging the idea that body parts act as a physical signifier to represent a greater socio-political power (with the capability to replace or “stand-in” for another figure), Elizabeth Grosz’s book, *Volatile Bodies: Toward A Corporeal Feminism*, offers significant analyses that are applicable to the liminal dimension of Vienna. Similar to Foucault, she argues that the body is an inscriptive surface and a space that reveals the psychological



makeup of a sovereign. The Duke's displacement of power onto Angelo is a testament to his own desire to remain *unmarked* by judgment, and that his psychological desire is to remain unseen. His choice to disconnect or fragment his body from Vienna means that he is willing to see his people suffer so he can heighten his own power. The Duke knows that Vienna will be in such a state of vulnerability that it will be easier to return and control others through unconventional punishments. I believe his choices reflect his own ego, or as feminist scholar Grosz has noted:

Inscriptions on the subject's body coagulate corporeal signifiers into signs, producing all the effects of meaning, representation, depth, within or subtending our social order... Corporeal fragmentation, the unity or disunity of the perceptual body, becomes organized in terms of the implied structure of an ego or consciousness ... The civilized body is constituted as a use value and its dimensions and capabilities become purchasable commodities, capable of selective augmentation, replacement, or transformation. (141)

Grosz emphasizes the fact that physically fragmented or socially contained bodies are easier to control and manipulate (especially with clear-cut roles or "inscriptions" such as leader, husband, wife, virgin, whore, simpleton, etc.). The moment that the Duke makes Angelo lead as a "civilized body," the easier it is to dissect his actions and plan his downfall. The Duke uses Angelo as a mere substitute or rentable commodity "capable of ... replacement," and this is another reminder that Foucault's explanation of body as "political economy" is proven true.

Furthermore, the abdication of power to Angelo emphasizes that the Duke has a weakened "structure" or "ego," and that he has instant "needs and desires" to control other bodies. He must "purchase" or insert another person in his place to enforce the laws he neglected to uphold, and to avoid the public dislike from enforcing those laws. It is not my intention to portray Angelo as a "victim" – I believe he is almost as tyrannical as the Duke. But I will strive to prove that when the Duke and Angelo attempt to reduce (i.e. "subject, use, transform") bodies to "parts," they exploit their own bodies as well. The shifting characters

are controlled like pieces on a chessboard to enforce warped concepts of social “order” that unfortunately only highlight failed disciplinary practices.

Because the Duke is the highest source of power, his words have the greatest effect on others (as seen by his punishments in the final act); however, his speech equally discloses his individual weaknesses as a man and a leader. As Foucault points out in *The History of Sexuality Volume One*, rhetoric is not only an instrument of power but also an opportunity for self-inflicted destruction. Ironically, the Duke undermines his own honor through his words when he claims that the motivation behind his travel is to bring justice to his people without being “exposed” or viewed as a tyrant. The Duke’s absence is the only factor that other people can internalize, which ignites a new reason to criticize him (for example, when Lucio prods Claudio to seek the Duke’s counsel, Claudio simply responds, “he is not to be found” (1.2.165)). Additionally, the Duke’s speech reinforces the idea that his psychological makeup is inseparable from his body, and that anatomical references merge political obligations to his corporeal focus.

The Duke claims that public opinion hinders his ability to rule a nation, “I love the people, / But do not like to stage me to their eyes: / Though it do well, I do not relish well / Their loud applause and Aves Vehement” (1.1.67-70). Here, the Duke attempts to change his form of control over his nation – from beneath the spotlight to behind the curtain – in an effort to produce a series of docile, loyal followers. Although the mention of “eyes” is an obvious reference to the Duke’s claimed “fear” of public visibility (reminding us that public shame and bodies go hand-in-hand), I believe, instead, that he reveals his actual *annoyance* at being caught or exposed for wrongdoings.

I again return to *Discipline and Punishment* to confirm that the separation of body from authority increases the opportunity and freedom to exploit others. In the words of Foucault:

Disciplinary power, on the other hand, is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in the subjection ... disciplinary power manifests its potency, essentially, by arranging objects. (187)

The Duke is a “disciplinary power” once he’s concealed. Despite the fact that subjects must be “constantly seen” to be disciplined, the Duke’s constant visibility as a leader hinders his capacity to initiate machinations under the safety of disguise. By replacing his body, he escapes his political obligation to uphold the law, yet he retains the privilege to subject others. Furthermore, he gains powerful “potency” through his ability to bend the rules and “arrange” bodies (conspiring murder and plotting the bed tricks). I want to highlight again that I think the Duke’s ruse is attributed more to his tyrannical nature and less to his cunning. His language weakens his “shyness” in Act One, and he contradicts his own fear in Act Four, proving that he wants to be seen, liked, and to receive “loud applause.” Upon his return to Vienna, he requests a clamorous announcement notifying all of his homecoming, “Give the like notice...And bid them bring the trumpets to the gate” (4.5.7-9); resembling the shifted location of his body from outside to inside Vienna, the truth of his intent to go from unseen to seen is revealed.

Initially, when the Duke lacks discipline from his subjects, he monopolizes invisibility to shield his body and reputation from the interactive gaze of others, and uses disguise to constantly observe and record the bodies under his responsibility. Once he is certain that he can reassume maximum power (i.e. accuse Angelo for premarital sex with Mariana, and coerce Isabella to claim her virginity is gone), the Duke is ready to divulge his true identity and reassert his privileges without restraint. The Duke proves that, as Isabella tells Angelo, “...it is excellent / To have a giant’s strength, but it is tyrannous / To use it like a giant” (2.2.108-10), especially when he speedily arranges three marriages over the course of

five lines. The fact that the Duke enforces unbearable shame onto others, but does not hold himself accountable for the same deeds, stresses his prioritization of public acceptance and admiration over law.

Jeffery Doty's article, "*Measure for Measure* and the Problem of Popularity," is relevant when paired side by side with Foucault's topic of critique (including the body and character). Doty discusses the connections between politics, public approval, and the relationships forged between sovereign and subject. Even throughout the Early Modern reign of Queen Elizabeth and James I, likeability was a calculated promotional tool for political success. Doty writes, "Popularity was a publicly negotiated way of legitimizing political power ... political publics ... were able to critique and check political power" (38-39). If the Duke left his body in Vienna to rule, or on the physical "stage" of the theatre, he would be fully visible and susceptible to the criticisms of the audience, and therefore, doubly jeopardize the untouchable legitimacy of his authority. Furthermore, the collective audience (i.e. eyes/bodies in bulk) would further reinforce or degrade the Duke's power through the activation or stagnancy of their physical responses – applause or speechless stares would be the final measurement weighing the Duke's authority.

Doty discusses how political influences negatively affect interactions between ruler and the ruled – that gossip produces a series of "detached observers of the monarchy with individual uses of and interests in court news" (Doty 39). Opposed to loyal followers who admire their ruler under the resolve of one nation, Vienna is instead fragmented by the political discourse that is supposed to keep them bound together. This is apparent especially in Act One, scene two. For the first time, the play is transported to "A Public Place." Lucio and two other gentlemen begin the scene with a political discussion, openly and informally questioning the Duke's absence, his relationship with the King of Hungary, as well as the new instatement of the deputy, Angelo. Through this short exchange the Duke's nervousness

about public criticism is verified and brought to life. As Doty argues, “a public formed around political news and gossip impinges on an absolute monarch’s authority and that, consequently, the Duke works to turn *Measure for Measure’s* proto-citizens back into obedient subjects” (35). The subjects of Vienna resent Angelo’s sudden implementation of law and become “detached observers of the monarchy” when they discuss his unfair punishments, which, as Doty implies, will demolish any chance of loyalty or respect for their ruler.

Due to the fact that Angelo practices excessive methods of discipline, he solidifies and further enflames an environment that exploits bodies and that elicits antiauthoritarian discourse. For example, Mistress Overdone describes Claudio’s imprisonment and says, “Well, well! There’s one yonder arrested and carried to prison, was worth five thousand of you all” (1.2.56-7); even Justice blatantly states, “Lord Angelo is severe” (2.1.278). Additionally, Lucio has no qualms about slandering Angelo in public either and shows fearless condescension and mockery when he insults Angelo’s bloodline and body, “Some report, a sea-maid spawned him. Some, that he was begot between two stock fishes. But it is certain that when he makes water, his urine is congealed ice; that I know to be true” (3.2.104-08). Lucio communicates contempt for his leader by jabbing at his rigid prudence and strict, cold nature, but also dehumanizes him to a sea creature, implying that his unyielding political punishment is slippery and spineless. Ironically Lucio concludes his insults with, “I know that to be true,” but the audience knows that Angelo’s cold rigidness (or his tendency to urinate ice) transitions to *hot* eroticism when he succumbs to his lust for Isabella and tries to coerce her into having sex.

Despite the fact that this language appears to be light-hearted banter, it actually reveals the plays interest in disrespect for politics/authority on the part of the populace as well as an overall lack of nationalism. In the article, “Fragments of Nationalism in *Troilus*

*and Cressida*,” Matthew Greenfield unpacks the meaning of nationalism and its relation to the body politic. He argues:

The moment of nationalism arrives when citizens see the state as a reflection of their will, as an expression of the collective sovereignty of the people. Nationalism is not a fact of political structure but a way of understanding one-self and one’s social environment. The citizens of a nation imagine themselves as a community, and they imagine this community as invested with a sovereign power. (182)

According to this idea, the Viennese people will never achieve nationalism because they constantly remain at odds with their sovereigns (whether it is for the Duke or Angelo). Furthermore, it is impossible for the people to “imagine themselves as a community” when their punishments call for shameful exile. Because Greenfield’s version of nationalism becomes impossible, Doty’s “detached observers” is the only proper political dynamic that describes the disgruntled and disrespected people of Vienna.

The recently imprisoned Claudio shows zero loyalty for the new deputy as well, echoing the continuation of Doty’s political gossip and Luckyj’s “insidious” nature of masculine discourse. Angelo is targeted for his political inexperience and misunderstanding of the people.

Whether it be the fault and glimpse of newness,  
Of whether that the *body public* be  
A horse whereon the governor doth ride,  
Who, *newly* in the seat, that it may know  
He can command, lets it straight feel the spur;  
Whether the tyranny be in his place  
Or in his eminence that fills it up,  
I stagger in—but this *new* governor...” (*italics mine*, 1.2.147-54)

The repeated use of the word “new” stresses Claudio’s frustration at the sudden changes enforced by a stranger. But, it also creates a binary between new *and old* (not in age, but in experience), which establishes a sense of insider versus outsider, us versus them, horse versus rider, or a fragmented governance. The political nature of disjointed authority and Doty’s detached observers is personified through the news that Claudio will be executed, or as

Mistress Overdone crudely states, he will be “carried away” to have “his head chopped off” (1.2.63). Furthermore, Claudio, like Lucio, degrades the statute of deputy when he compares a horse and rider to the body public and sovereign. Once Angelo is at “fault,” impulsively jabbing the body of the beast beneath him, the word “seat” is reduced from prestigious thrown to ordinary saddle. Politically speaking, “ride” symbolizes the ruler’s ability to dominate or control movement of the people; however, socially speaking, the sexual innuendos provoked from “ride” overshadow any indications of honorable leadership, direction, or ability to uphold the city.

The word ride continues to magnify physical degradation because sex is the theme of the scene up until this point. Moments before Claudio’s speech, several characters were discussing brothels, prostitutes, hips, illegitimate pregnancies, and venereal diseases. I draw attention to the removal of all brothels in Vienna because it reveals volumes about body-as-nation and disregard for nation/authority. Mistress Overdone, the brothel owner, is beside herself and clearly concerned about her future after Pompey (her servant) announces the news. She exclaims, “What shall become of me?” (1.2.97). Her fear of becoming economically obsolete is integrally tied to the fact that her worth depends upon the continued exploitation of female bodies. This reminds the audience that women of Vienna fall victim to male exploitation, but additionally exploit themselves to hold the lowest rank in the patriarchal system.

Female bodies that comprise and/or uphold the foundation (‘houses’) of the nation are literally being demolished. News that Mistress Overdone’s business will be decommissioned is a valid concern, as prostitutes had no (or extremely limited) acceptance into other domestic, social, or economic arenas.<sup>1</sup> Towards the end of the play the Duke and Lucio

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<sup>1</sup> Carol Thomas Neely’s article, “Constructing Female Sexuality in the Renaissance: Stratford, London, Windsor, Vienna” offers an extremely persuasive argument displaying the ways women were socially compartmentalized by the strict regulations of men, leaving them without any wiggle room to

solidify this exclusive mentality when they address Mariana's status, the Duke says, "Why, are you nothing then: neither maid, widow, nor wife!" and then Lucio responds: "My lord, she may be a punk; for many of them are neither maid, widow, nor wife" (5.1.178-79; 180-81). Here, the audience is informed that the bodies of prostitutes are punished for their lack of conditioned "femininity" whereas outside the public eye they are used for immediate, recreational satisfaction. However, when it comes to the longevity of marriage, or the task to extend male bloodlines, they are deemed worthless because their virginity – the crucial gendered element required from the marriage paradigm – can never be revived. Without the status of maid, widow, or wife, women are erased from the body politic.

Allowing brothels to be in business for so long is a constant reminder of the Duke's inability to enforce law. His absent body is exacerbated through the co-dependent, exploitative, physical relationship between men and women. The existence and longevity of brothels in Vienna both entices and encourages men to utilize its services, and employ vulgar rhetoric without restraint, "Behold, behold, where Madam Mitigation comes! / I have purchased as many diseases under her roof..." (1.2.41-42). Unfortunately, not only does this "political economy" or social currency/practice create men who are dependent upon and conditioned to procure sex, but it also generates the long-term societal need to recruit female prostitutes who rely on men for money. Despite the fact that brothels are shut down with the intention to rectify male behavior, the ban simultaneously strips females of their economic stability and occupation (however unsophisticated it might be). Instead of "purging" society of illicit activities, Angelo replenishes an already broken community with more unoccupied, uncivilized, and disenfranchised bodies that are suddenly rendered useless – since they are

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function outside those assigned modalities of behavior: "Women are defined and contained through their place in the marriage paradigm—as maidens, wives, or widows. These roles are in turn defined by the mode of sexuality appropriate to them: virginity for maidens, marital chastity for wives, and abstinence for widows. Hence, what Joan Kelly calls 'the social relations of the sexes': women's economic, legal, and cultural status in relation to that of men, rest on male constructions of women's sexuality and sexual roles." (213)



ineligible for respectable work and unprepared for marriage. We see how lower class women suffer from a loss of subjectivity: not only are they “nothing” to men, but are also further fragmented from other upper class women and expectations surrounding the female gender.<sup>2</sup>

Vulgar discourse reveals that a politically broken nation negatively affects the social dynamics of the public, and creates a series of infected, unregulated, and dilapidated bodies. Pompey says, “All houses in the suburbs of Vienna must be *plucked* down” to which Mistress Overdone retorts, “But shall all our houses of resort in the suburbs be *pulled* down?” (1.2.88-89; 93-94). The words “pluck” versus “pulled” provoke an undeniable disparity between the male consumer and the female provider. “Pluck” implies a dainty dismantling and insinuates that there is freedom to select based on individual preference. “Pulled” has an adverse, darker effect implying a forced interaction, and the finality of Pompey’s response “to the ground mistress” (1.2.95) provokes a dual meaning. While the “ground” symbolizes annihilated buildings, it also implies death (i.e. a burial) of the business, as well as an empty space that was once full or pregnant but is now absent. Like the Duke, Mistress Overdone uses the humanizing agent of a pronoun (“our”) to transcend her public “house,” to her own personified, individual body.

Although this closure evokes feelings of distress for Mistress Overdone, it proves that men need regulation as a form of protection against their innate tendency to overindulge. Lucio conveys this indulgence when he insults another man for having too much sex, “Thy bones are hollow; impiety has made a feast of thee” (1.2.52-53). Similar to plucking and

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<sup>2</sup> In *Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed*, Peter Stallybrass explains that divisions of gendered class actually help sustain patriarchal elite systems. He says, “Within the dominant discourses of early modern England, then, woman’s body could be both symbolic map of the ‘civilized’ and the dangerous terrain that had to be colonized. These conceptualizations can be related to the contradictory formation of woman within the categorizes of gender and of class. To emphasize gender is to construct woman-as-the-same: women are constituted as a single category, set over against the category of men. To emphasize class is to differentiate *between* women, dividing them into distinct social groups... In societies where heterosexuality and marriage are prescribed, those privileges can only be conferred back on *men*, so the differentiation of women simultaneously establishes or reinforces the differentiation of men. The deployment of women into different classes, then, is in the interests of the ruling elite, because it helps to perpetuate and to naturalize class structure.” (133)

eating too many fruits, the “feast” of sex leads to self-inflicted physical sickness, emptiness, or “hollowness,” or as Claudio dramatically complains, “Like rats... a thirsty evil, and when we drink we die” (1.2.121-22). Hollow bones and rats create a stark contrast to a prominent, pregnant belly, and remind audiences that a nation’s “seed,” or extension of bloodline, are destined for barrenness or destruction if not approached with limitations. Masculine bodies engaged in unregulated intercourse are marked with signs of disease and death, and additionally, ruin female bodies that should produce pure English children. My issue is that the women of Vienna endure masculine verbal abuse whether they are married wives or prostitutes. Men categorize the opposite sex as a source of destruction, but without women they would have no hetero-normative way to assert masculinity and dominance. Therefore, women remain objects under constant cultural examination without the privilege of personal agency. What I want to emphasize is that women are always spectators in the game of patriarchy despite their social role, and that they are trapped in a system that relies on their oppression and equally depends upon their ability to repeat gendered conditions of submission.

Despite Mistress Overdone’s dismay, Pompey acts shockingly cavalier. Because he remains calm, he insinuates that Vienna will develop social work-arounds to adjust to new law yet still perpetuate hypersexuality. Furthermore, when he says there is no need to end her “trade”, he shows the resilience of the people to adjust their illegal activities to new rules that set stricter limits. Pompey even takes this a step further and refers to the outlaw-ish occupation as a “service” which has benefitted the community. While he implies that Mistress Overdone should exude proud fearlessness regarding her business, he also implies that she can avoid punishment due to her work ethic, “courage, there will be pity taken on you; you that have worn your eyes almost out in the service, you will be considered” (1.2.102). For Mistress Overdone there is no option to avoid the public gaze. Her existence is

rooted in physical engagement, and her “worn” “eyes” through syphilis, which causes blindness or her overdone/expired identity), draws the focus of the audience to her used body, but also implies that she has exercised her own eyes to solicit customers seeking sex. Whereas the Duke wants to run away from attention to restore order and regain control, Mistress Overdone wants to remain in the spotlight to sustain masculine transgressions, and therefore, her own fruitful exploitative business.

Men continuously abuse female bodies, but I want to reiterate that the Duke exploits men as well. Corruption of authority is the crux of the problem in Vienna and cannot be blamed on the typical human tendency to fall into/repeat social disorder. Jonathan Dollimore’s article “Transgression and Surveillance in *Measure for Measure*,” insists that the failure of Vienna is not just physical lust but a reflection of absent authority. “Whatever subversive identity the sexual offenders in this play possess is a construction put upon them by the authority which wants to control them ... Prostitution and lechery are identified as the causes of crisis yet we learn increasingly of a corruption more political than sexual” (Dollimore 42). Dollimore’s comment bolsters my claim that this play is a critique of tyranny, especially when we further analyze the motivation behind the Duke’s disappearance. The problem is not only attributed to lack of authority, but more importantly that the authority utilizes sexual corruption as a ruse to leave his post, reinsert Angelo within it, and then catch him at his own corruption as an excuse to orchestrate the dissemination of punishment.

It is also important to discuss pregnancy in *Measure*, as it is tied to gendered punishment and sexualization. As shown from Juliet’s body, chaos and fear explode when females occupy liminal spaces between maid, wife, widow, or whore. Men resort to banishment to accommodate this unknown “boundary” and the potential instability it brings to social order. After Juliet’s pregnancy goes public, her exile is a matter of utmost

importance. Pompey asks, “What shall be done sir, with the groaning Juliet? / She’s very near her hour,” to which Angelo retorts, “Dispose of her / To some more fitter place; and that with speed” (2.2.15-18). A sense of shared urgency is exuded when they mention “near her hour” and “speed,” but it is interesting to observe their comprehensive disregard and contempt for an unmarried pregnant woman (especially when compared to the sympathy and worry that others express about Claudio’s death).

Although Claudio must pay for his sexual activity with a swift and public death, Juliet must pay with eternal shame of a ruined reputation. Angelo’s word choice, “Dispose,” is powerful in its finality because it insinuates that Juliet’s body is irrevocably sullied, and should be thrown away like garbage. What is more interesting is that the Provost does not refer to her by name, but instead as The “Groaning” Juliet. Ironically, Juliet has yet to utter any lines; however, the use of the gerund converts her silence into a perpetual sexual conversation, implying that she is hindered – and continuously defined – for nine months due to one physical act. Angelo’s word “fitter” suggests that her body should be moved to a more “appropriate” (or secluded) place, but also to a larger space that accommodates her growing torso. Juliet’s pregnant shape is a reminder of the body’s tendency to act as a source of interactive, dynamic experiences. Because it has the ability to display social signifiers (i.e. a bastard child), her belly and not her character per se, triggers external responses/punishment from others.

In “Pleasure and Danger: Measuring Female Sexuality in *Measure for Measure*,” Mario DiGangi tackles the measurement and interpretation of female sexuality through bodily characteristics. His work helps elevate my interest in how the gendered body can, at times, erase self-agency. Juliet is feared because the evidence of masculine lawlessness is written on her body, and men therefore categorize her through this gendered milestone. He writes:

Pregnant, marked with the prints of sexual intercourse, Juliet's excessive body is, appropriately, read cumulatively: male judgments of what her belly reveals—sexual appetite, uxorial docility, ethical and theological shame, legal infraction—amass charges of culpable agency and carnal passivity...the pregnant belly is therefore an image of her own fulfilled sexuality, her belly an eloquent narrative of her illicit desires. Juliet's expressive body, which is both the ritual object of public scrutiny and the subject of Claudio's discourse, explains the silence of her tongue. (592-93)

DiGangi's explanation provides an impressive reiteration of the hydra of sexuality Juliet's belly embodies. Furthermore, it is a reminder that her voice is rendered irrelevant because her body speaks – or groans – louder than her words. Despite the individuality of her pregnancy, she is silenced or erased behind a curtain of general sexualization. In the early modern era the belly/stomach was already a heightened zone of cultural interest that established the period's medical understanding between the body's relationship to and dispositional tendencies, which Michael Schoenfeldt captures in his essay "Fables of the Belly in Early Modern England."

He explains that "the stomach was imagined to complete physiologically a process that begins in the ethical judgment: the discrimination of dross from nutrition, of good from bad...The stomach is at the center of a system demanding perpetual, anxious osmosis with the outside world" (245). Since the stomach was already associated with character assessment, decision-making skills, and a means to measure individual integrity, it becomes more understandable that men regarded the pregnant belly from an existing angle of intense judgment and fear; a pregnant belly acts as an extension of masculinity that includes subjective worth and credibility. However, pregnancy is also evidence that the feminine body expands beyond "nutrition," or sex as pure procreation, and is capable to intake "dross" or recreational desire as well. As DiGangi asserts above, the belly is a sign of "fulfilled sexuality," or rather, self-possession and physical control, but more importantly, the satiation of pleasure for the sake of pleasure alone. When women are equally fulfilled as men, the structure of the marriage paradigm breaks because there is no one to occupy the weaker,

abject space – meaning the dominant gender loses authority over the other weaker sex. This proves that coitus is not the main issue in Vienna, but it is the female ability to *display* sex through pregnancy that expedites Juliet's punishment including exile and slander, and solidifies her lower place in the patriarchy.

DiGangi's reference to "the *ritual* of public scrutiny" echoes Foucault's earlier ideas that the "ritual" of punishment must be communal and spectacular, and always marks, brands, or "prints" the subject. For Juliet, her punishment is banishment but it is also her "excessive" body as a site of male inscription and discourse. Claudio says, "The stealth of our most mutual entertainment / With character too gross is writ on Juliet" (1.2.143-44). After Juliet is marked physically (i.e. pregnant), it becomes easier to justify her downgrade in social status. She must bear the disproportionate weight of social disapproval due to the masculine impression left on her figure.

Juliet's pregnancy confirms that unmarried bodies are negatively defined by autonomy, but it also reveals that married bodies are easier to punish because they are held accountable to marriage laws. With this in mind, the Duke's hurried unions are a sign that his future control is more justifiably implemented on docile husbands and wives. Because Juliet's (i.e. gross) body is the topic of public discussion, the audience is privy to the inescapable and harsh world of masculine criticism, including sexualized slander as gendered, Viennese shame. All women, whether they are maid or prostitute, married or unmarried, are publicly discussed and regarded as whores, which attributes to the fact that they are viewed solely as sexual beings.

Gossip in Vienna is as widespread as overt sexualization. Juliet is victim to a series of insults regarding her condition: First, Lucio says "I would be sorry should [Claudio's life] be thus foolishly lost at a game of tick-tack" (1.3.179-80), reducing their "true contract" to sexualized folly and prioritizing Claudio's life above Juliet's; second, the Provost says Juliet

is “falling in the flaws of her own youth” (2.3.11), thus degrading her emotions to innate immaturity; and, third, the Duke refers to her body as “the sin you carry” (19), and “the sin hath brought you to this shame” (31), escalating her public shame to the devout, infinite world. When the Duke visits Juliet in prison, the swift conversation shared between them reiterates the validity of the gendered binary (that the female must occupy the lesser, abject space) as well as Foucault’s statement in *The History of Sexuality* that “the will to power operates both through the production and the repression of discourse” (7). Despite the fact that Juliet’s pregnancy is claimed as “mutual entertainment,” the Duke holds only Juliet accountable. She is easily coerced into compliance and verbalizes her acquiescence – thereby solidifying her state of inferiority.

*DUKE.* Love you the man that wrong’d you?  
*JULIET.* Yes, as I love the woman that wrong’d him.  
*DUKE.* So then it seems your most offenceful act was mutually committed?  
*JULIET.* Mutually.  
*DUKE.* Then was your sin of heavier kind than his.  
*JULIET.* I do confess it, and repent it, father. (2.3.24-30)

From this exchange, it is clear that the Duke and Juliet agree that a woman’s chastity is equivalent to her virtue, therefore agreeing again that her punishment should be a “heavier kind” than Claudio’s death.

Ironically, the Duke examines Juliet’s level of truth, discusses her remorse and penance, and measures the weight of her sin while disguised as a clergyman. Obviously, he can never ecumenically absolve her “sins” because he is not part of any religious order. Therefore, this scene is another unconcealed demonstration of his arrogance. He considers his secular authority more powerful than religion as this is the first of two sacraments (confession/marriage) he exploits to facilitate his own plans. Juliet does not contradict the friar/Duke and respectfully “takes” or absorbs the shared transgression onto her individual body. Despite the fact that pregnancy seems to become her own internalized flaw, “I do

repent me as it is an evil, / And take the shame with joy” (34-35), it is possible to interpret her acceptance of the sin as a sign of defiance as one rarely compares punishment with “joy.” On the other hand, her verbal slippage into inferiority ensures the Duke that he has contained her previously unregulated sexuality, and additionally, stifles some of the judgments provoked from her embodied “illicit desires.” The Duke’s short visit is intended to inform Juliet about Claudio’s scheduled death, but his language suggests that his first priority is to ensure Juliet believes she is in the wrong. This is essential because he transforms a “wild” body into another docile follower, and manages to protect/sustain the gender binary that requires her docility and eventual marriage.

## Section 2:

### Silence That Fellow; Or, Punished Bodies Cleaved by Marriage

In a play immersed in non-choice, *Measure* shows us that tyranny and anarchy come hand in hand. The only cure for communal chaos, toxicity, and disease is punishment. I will first tackle the effective and ineffective nature of the Duke’s punishments, borrowing concepts of discipline once again from Foucault to emphasize the fear of shame, but then tackle the ways that abuse is separately inflicted on male and female. I will approach reprimand from the general lens of marriage, and then jump into more gendered platforms of disgrace because early modern societal fears were invested in what the gendered body could achieve and destroy. As mentioned, Foucault states that punishment is inseparable from the body and requires public exhibition or “punishment-as-spectacle” to operate effectively. This brings me to the last act, where the Duke’s machinations are finally revealed at the “public place near the city gate.” Once the characters are congregated together to receive their “deserved” comeuppances, the Duke serves a *lack* of legitimate justice and an *excess* of torture through control of speech or silence.



Torture in *Measure* can be attributed to forced verbal confessions. When Angelo admits that he is “guilter” than his guilt, he publicizes irreversible words that also give the Duke ammunition to reciprocate punishment, “But let my trial be mine own confession. / Immediate sentence, then” (5.1. 369-70). The Duke meets the urgency of Angelo’s request when he says, “marry her instantly” (375). Foucault says that it is “through the confession, the accused committed himself to the procedure; he signed the truth of the preliminary investigation” (39). Although the Duke has the power to implement punishment, it is Angelo who initiates his own torturous process and regulation because he admits to his own transgressions, and thus justifies the Duke’s disappearance to examine his subjects. This happens with Isabella as well. When she announces that she has sex with Angelo, her bodily act can never be reversed because it is solidified in language (despite the fact that it didn’t happen). Her confession is torturous because it is lie revealed in front of everyone, and proves to be a hardship even Lucio sympathizes with, he says “sir, I think if you handled her privately she would sooner confess; perchance publicly she’ll be ashamed” (274-75).

Despite her embarrassment, the Duke allows Isabella to confess which ensures a lengthier, dramatic, and more humiliating bodily experience. In the Torture section of *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault explains that torture, in fact, is not only intended to correct the criminal as punishment does, but instead to mark them in moments of painful shame. He says:

Furthermore, torture forms part of a ritual. It is an element in the liturgy of punishment and meets two demands. It must mark the victim: it is intended, either by the scar it leaves on the body, or by the *spectacle that accompanies it, to brand the victim with infamy*; even if its function is to ‘purge’ the crime, *torture does not reconcile*; it traces around or, rather, on the very body of the condemned man signs that must not be effaced; in any case, *men will remember public exhibition*, the pillory, torture, and pain duly observed...public torture...*must be spectacular*, it must be seen by all almost as its triumph. (*italics mine*, 34)

The Duke has already shown himself to be dishonorable in his manipulations of power, but I cannot deny that his final tricks are unforgettably “spectacular” because they do not resolve anything (not whoredom or his own tyranny, etc.). Rather, the torture in the last scene notifies the subjects’ that through the forced actions of their bodies the Duke has regained absolute power. The Duke takes “public exhibition” to an intensified level as his open form of torture is sublimated and hidden behind the public “ritual” or conventional veil of marriage.

In Act Five the Duke re-establishes his authoritarian control by reducing a celebrated ceremony to a dreaded transaction rooted in ultimatums: men must follow his sentences or face death. Under these tyrannous conditions, marriage is (uncharacteristically) incapable of any social comfort because rewards from contracts (i.e. a dowry or love) have been replaced with the eternal reminder of a forced social confession, or the torturous “technique” of punishment since marriage “is not an extreme expression of lawless rage” (Foucault 33). Whereas marriage was previously treated as a social mark binding two civilized bodies, it is now imposed upon the body as a brand, sign, or reminder of shame. The Duke’s “techniques” (marriage and/or death) do not offer any chance of “reconciliation;” marriage to Kate, a prostitute, does not end prostitution, and marriage to Mariana, an unwanted woman, does not make her desirable. Because these women are “nothing,” or unfit for the marriage paradigm, they are erased – rendering this play a tragedy more than a comedy.

The Duke enforces a series of patched-up unions to provide justice to the dishonored women (i.e. Mariana, Kate Keepdown, and Juliet); however, this justice falls short. No one seems to achieve a modicum of happiness or absolution as the play comes to a close. The Duke, who seems to reject prostitution in general, still uses all women as whores; he turns the sacred act of marriage (ignoring verbal consent)<sup>3</sup> into another form of exploitation because he

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<sup>3</sup> Arranging marriages on the spot – without any sign of the performativity (or verbal consent, or what Austin refers to as the “speech act”) from the parties involved – is another critique dramatizing the Duke’s tyranny. According to “Doing things with Words: Another Look at Marriage Rites and

forces women and men into wedlock whether it is desired or not. In an attempt to suggest that the Duke's plans are stemmed from humility and a desire to act upon principles, Cynthia Lewis interprets these marital moments as a sign of "tender-hearted leniency" (281). She goes on to say, "The Duke's new-found openness toward his subjects enables him ... to make judgments on his people by listening to them and by incorporating their viewpoints into his own otherwise sterner verdicts. Judgment in *Measure* is ultimately a collective activity" (286). The Duke's "collective" decisions, I believe, are anything but inclusive or tender-hearted since the marriages are thrust upon Lucio and Angelo without room for argument. The men admit that they would rather die than get married, "This may prove worse than hanging" (358); "I crave death more willingly than mercy" (474). I do not agree with the counterargument that the Duke "listens" and "incorporates viewpoints" into his punishments since they bring about such despair and shock. Lewis' understanding seems to confuse authoritarianism for compassion, or tender-heartedness. If the Duke wanted to commit to "open" discussion or feedback, his decisions would have been phrased as questions not commands.

Although I disagree with Lewis' argument, she creates a useful counterpoint to further articulate my criticism of the Duke's actions. The fact that he does not listen to others and acts out of his own volitions reveals that he uses and abuses hegemonic social conventions (i.e. marriage) to flex the muscles of his absolute authority. The "divine" ceremony of marriage and the verbal consent required to form unions are politically constructed rituals

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Spousals in Renaissance Drama and Fiction", forced marriages without consent would not necessarily be legitimate under law. "In Catholic Europe from the latter half of the twelfth century until 1563, and in Protestant England from the Reformation until 1753, it was possible [for two people to declare themselves man and wife per *verba da praesenti* – that is, in words indicating that they regard themselves married from that moment, as opposed to words expressing an intention to marry at some time in the future]... The essential condition for marriage was the consent of both parties, and in cases in which a court had to decide whether consent had been given, careful attention was paid to the form of words allegedly used" (Nelson, 353). Because Claudio claims that he and Juliet were already married upon a "true contract" (1.2.134), i.e. consent, their harsh punishment actually reveals the unease surrounding the "anomalous state of being both married and not." (Nelson 361)

that bend and sway to the command of his words. His rhetorical style has nothing to do with the truth, but instead with his own sense of entitlement. For example, when he plans the bed-trick between Angelo and Mariana he relays the finalized details to Isabella *prior* to Mariana's confirmation, "I have not yet made known to Mariana / A word of this" (4.1.49-50). Although Mariana wholeheartedly agrees with the plan the Duke is arrogant enough to *assume* she will automatically say yes, which gives me reason to believe that his sole purpose is exploitation of her body. The ease with which he incorporates her into his plans demonstrates Foucault's sense of sovereign "privilege." The Duke has no fear using bodies within his reach as stepping-stones to achieve maximum power. He tells Mariana:

Fear you not at all,  
 He is your husband on a pre-contract:  
 To bring you thus together 'tis no sin,  
 Sith that the justice of your title to him,  
 Doth flourish the deceit.—Come, let us go;  
 Our corn's to reap, for yet our tithe's to sow. (4.2.71-76)

It is ironic that Lewis claims the Duke listens to women, or appears honest in his intentions, when in reality he excludes them until he determines the most convenient time to include them. For example, he expects Mariana to trust him and agree to the plan when he confides in Isabella first.

Furthermore, the marriages are presented as gifts to women when they do not offer personal or judicial absolution. The Duke admits that he arranged them through his own manipulative skills, and admits that Mariana is the underdog in the plan:

Craft against vice I must apply,  
 With Angelo tonight shall lie,  
 His old betrothed, but despised:  
 So disguise shall be th' disguised,  
 Pay with falsehood exacting,  
 And perform an old contracting. (3.2.270-75)

When the Duke acknowledges that he will use Mariana's body as a tool of punishment for Angelo, he also sets up Angelo to have sex with a "technically" damaged body (Angelo

claims that she has a dishonorable reputation, but the audience knows that is a lie to end their existing “contract”), and therefore defiles his own body in the process. The Duke’s punishment suddenly degrades sex to a perpetual source of deception.

In “Bed Tricks: On Marriage as the End of Comedy in *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*,” Janet Adelman opposes Lewis’ work because she claims that bed-tricks are not a valid social resolution, but in fact an orchestration of poor leadership, she writes:

Thus transformed, these bed tricks do not bode well as cures. The psychic violence of their proposed solutions merely illustrates the seriousness of the disease: the extent to which sexuality here is a matter of deception on the one side and hit-and-run contamination on the other underscores the deep incompatibility that separate sexuality from marriage. (122)

Adelman acknowledges the fact that the Duke uses the bed trick to perpetuate the same crime as males who visit brothels. Although the Duke does not engage in sexual activity, he exchanges or pimps two consenting female bodies (like prostitutes) to have sex with Angelo – who is interested in pleasure and uninterested in marriage. The forced domestic merger that ties Angelo and Mariana together actually forces them emotionally apart, and the fact that the Duke uses sexual trickery to trap their bodies inside an ideology that requires eternal honesty makes his plans apparently dishonest, or as Adelman suggests, reveals his “psychic violence.” The public torture of unwanted marriage acts as a constant reminder or mark of the Duke’s reactivated power, as well as the vengeance he places on his subjects. Despite pleading for death or alternate punishments, Angelo and Lucio cannot reverse the “seal” of their marriages and reveals that the Duke has regained full command over their docile, yet miserable, bodies.

Marriage as public shame is a reminder that the Duke’s corrective punishments leave visible signs of his power on the corporeal form. Throughout the play the surface of the body is referred to as impressionable space, or landscape that represents the inner dichotomy of

good and bad: honor equates to clean, pure skin that “stands without blemish” (5.1.111), and dishonor parallels to a stained derma, or a “blister’d report” (2.3.12). When Lucio must marry the prostitute Kate Keepdown, he knows this is a huge blow to his own reputation because the only dowry he inherits is the blemish of her prostitution. “I beseech your highness, do not marry me to a whore...Marrying a punk, my lord, is pressing to death, whipping, and hanging” (5.1.511-12; 520-21). Lucio compares the shame of his new marital status to physical violence marked upon his body – a sign of his own slavery to power as well as Foucault’s claim that torture brands the body with “infamy.” In this context, “pressing” relates to the mental damage that Lucio will accrue from the Duke’s punishment; however, the conceptual mark of his infamy has the same effect as Angelo’s ascension to power because both of their bodies undergo the Duke’s “stamp” of approval to initiate changed social statuses.

The Duke knows Lucio’s masculine honor will suddenly evaporate when paired with Kate’s non-existent chastity, especially since virginity was a social priority. In the article, “Assaying the Power of Chastity in *Measure for Measure*,” Barbara Baines claims that female physical chastity is the most powerful agent women possess in a patriarchal environment because men measure their worth on the sexual status of the female body. She explains:

Chastity acquires importance as the site or context within which authority manifests itself. Derived from woman’s chastity, masculine authority asserts itself by the control of woman’s chastity...Masculine authority depends not only upon control of the chastity of women but upon the male’s adherence to chastity as well, for chastity determines power and place for men as well as for women. (296-97)

As seen from Baine’s statement, marriage is used to separate females from their own bodily power because “husbands” must control “wives.” However, Lucio has no chance of controlling Kate because she has engaged in repeated sex, which destroys his ability to control her *marital* chastity and solidifies his fate to be a weak husband. The Duke knows

that marriage is corporeally and socially binding – or as conduct literature describes, “They shall be two in one flesh” (Vives 3) – thus uniting Lucio’s social reputation to Kate’s shameful bodily condition.

Throughout this paper I have strived to unpack the ways social and political regulations are placed onto the body via speech and marriage. The Duke’s degradation of marriage as a negative mark is “spectacular” since, according to conduct literature, the ceremony was considered an important privilege for early modern English gentlemen. This becomes clear when the Provost asks Pompey to behead the drunkard Barnardine. Pompey replies, “If the man be a bachelor, sir, I can; but if he be a married man, he’s his wife’s head; and I can never cut off a woman’s head” (4.2.2-4). Here, the audience experiences the strength of ideological obligations, and how marriage ties two bodies together.<sup>4</sup> In *A Very Fruitful and Pleasant Book Called the Instruction of a Christian Women*, Juan Luis Vives portrays marriage as a mutually rewarding experience that benefits husbands and wives alike – as long as they remain within their physical, gender-specific roles. Pompey’s hesitation to fragment a married couple (or cut off a man’s head) is justifiable especially when Vives’ insinuates that successful spouses are those who are physically bound together. Vives declares:

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<sup>4</sup> The actual “union” of marriage is legally/culturally strong; however, the bonds and benefits (as explained in early modern conduct literature) are especially weak when compared to the strength of female bonds displayed in the last act. The Duke is ready to execute Angelo until Mariana and Isabella kneel and plead for his life. Isabella could have easily remained silent at this moment to expedite Angelo’s death; however, she publicly defends his character because Mariana asks for her help (when the Duke asks Isabella a question she does not even respond). More importantly, her defense of Angelo is not as convincing as her fierce hatred for him verbalized earlier on, and therefore I believe Isabella feigns physical submission and impersonates forgiveness out of friendship and compassion, not obligation, for Mariana. According to Marjorie Garber’s essay “Out of Joint,” kneeling was not only an act of obedience but also a sign of defiance, “But the knee as body part does not always connote homage or prayer. Although it is metaphorically a sign of linkage and thus obeisance, metonymically the knee rebels...women do use the supplicant knee in the ordinary way to petition grace or favor: Volumnia kneels to Coriolanus, and Isabella to Angelo. But the knee is a tricky joint, and a “trick knee” (from trichier, to deceive) is weak, deceptive, and liable to fail. Especially when it is the woman who is suspected of turning tricks.” (27) Isabella as “trickster” is appropriate, because she is a woman who consistently defies male rule.

Nature sheweth that the male's duty is to succor and defend, and the female's to follow and to wait upon the male and to creep under his aid and obey him, that she may live the better...For in wedlock the man resembleth the reason and the woman the body. Now reason ought to rule and the body to obey if a man will live. Also St. Paul sayth the head of the woman is the man. (115)

Despite his intentions to portray women in a positive light, I consider these “instructions” detrimental to feminine autonomy because they reinforce the restrictive nature of the gendered marriage paradigm.

Vives' work further validates Baines' ideas that men limit females to their bodies (i.e. physical chastity) to reflect their own masculine power and success. Women are severed from intellect (literally, since, as Vives explains, marriage equates to a male head attached on a female body) and are expected to consistently obey or submit. The Duke's manipulation of Mariana and Isabella in the bed-trick is a testament to his masculine ability to “rule” female bodies, and furthermore, Angelo's assumption that the women were ordered to do this – as they could never devise the trick on their own – is equally condescending, “These poor informal women are no more / But instruments of some more mightier member / That sets them on” (4.1.235-37). Through discourse, Angelo immediately renders Mariana and Isabella “informal” or weaker than the capabilities of a mightier man.

At the same time the Duke also strips masculine honor from Vives' concepts of marriage because he does not use his duty to “defend” women, but instead to emphasize his own tyrannical power to plot their disgraces. And the Duke seems to enjoy himself as he asserts his abuse of power. He sarcastically tells Angelo to interrogate the culprits who exposed him: “And punish them to your height of pleasure” (5.1.248), and then orders Lucio away, “Take him to prison, / And see our pleasure herein executed” (518-519)<sup>5</sup>, which

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<sup>5</sup> In this line, “executed” possesses a dual meaning: to literally kill, or instead, to simply complete the task of Lucio's imprisonment.



suggests that he is more concerned with his theatrical spectacle to humiliate people into compliance opposed to producing improved, loyal citizens.

The end of the play proves to be nothing about “resolution” and everything about the Duke’s chance to reclaim and reassert his patriarchal power. Due to his ability to restore the long-lost ideology of marriage, he encloses the widespread, uncontrollable fires of lust within the controlled boundary of English matrimony (solidifying his role in the patriarchy). Additionally, utilizing marriage as the cure for a fragmented public once again addresses the larger socio-political anxiety regarding nationhood, and reinforces Foucault and Grosz’s ideas that social “norms” of marriage are operated through the body. As mentioned earlier, marriage was a charged topic of discussion throughout early modern England because it ensured the proper continuation of the English empire, and symbolized a successful patriarchy.<sup>6</sup> Albert Cacicedo’s essay “‘She is Fast My Wife’: Sex, Marriage, and Ducal Authority in *Measure for Measure*,” connects marriage to the effectiveness of a sovereign when he states, “The absence of a well-defined mode of marriage...inscribes the absence of a well-defined system of paternal authority” (195). Because the Duke forces marriage upon his people without their consent he can never achieve their loyalty or what Cacicedo considers a “well-defined” system of authority (which includes proper oversight and blessing of respectable unions).

Although the Duke uses marriage as masculine punishment, marriage as social expectation reinforces female subjugation and invites men to imprint “violence” onto female bodies. Through the bed trick the Duke encourages Mariana to be ruled like Vives’ version of an obedient wife; yet, his request that she sacrifices her identity to literally “creep under [a

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<sup>6</sup> In *Forms of Nationhood*, Richard Helgerson also acknowledges the cultural concern surrounding English identity throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He says, “England was now calling itself an empire. What were the signs of imperial stature?” Helgerson further argues that “stature” including politics and law, are matters captured in the work of writers such as: Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, John Speed, and Richard Hooker, etc. (4)

husband]” is anything but respectable, and entices her to prioritize marriage over the requirement of physical chastity. Mariana wants her man so badly that she can “crave no other” (5.1.422)), forgives Angelo’s misdemeanors, and claims his propensity for badness is rooted in potential for greatness. “They say best men are moulded out of faults, / And, for the most, becomes much more the better / For being a little bad. So may my husband” (435-40).

Her willingness to reduce his serious offenses to “a little bad” shows she places him above her own self-respect (which is emphasized when she kneels and speaks beneath him); it also suggests that feminine exile, or marital obsolescence, is more shameful than being an undesired wife because Mariana chooses to be unhappily wed instead of single in the private grange area. This mentality is opposite for the men, who would rather die than be tied down by shameful marriage. Despite her approval of Angelo as a husband, he contradicts her sentiments when he says, “I am sorry that such sorrow I procure, / And so deep sticks it in my penitent heart / That I crave death more willingly than mercy; / ‘Tis my deserving, and I do entreat it” (472-75). Not only does the Duke force marriages that reinforce female, domestic, domination, but he also creates the hateful scenarios that grant men opportunities to verbalize hatred for the opposite sex.

Mariana’s eagerness to be Angelo’s wife indicates that she is ready to assume her new responsibilities, such as the opportunity to modify his character/behaviors and absorb his transgressions. (Here, we see how the Duke’s punishment resembles Foucault’s theory that “[Sentences] are intended to correct, reclaim,” and “cure” (10)). Although wives were expected to cultivate better men – by softening their dispositions, maintaining marital chastity, and practicing silent obedience (or as Mariana says, “be ruled by him” (4.6.4)) – it leaves women little room to explore their own spaces of behavior. Despite the fact that she craves marriage, we see how wifery wedges women between a strange social binary, one that requires their private leadership and refinement, yet public subservience.

Although wives had to be strong caretakers of men they still were categorized as the “weaker sex.” The reconfiguration of men from disloyal-traveler to loyal-yolk fellow is tied to improvement of the nation, but also posed as a measurement of female, domestic success to ensure women remained obedient, “The good woman by obeying rules her husband” (Vives 107). Therefore, feminine victory as wives is only recognized when they obey or submit in relationships. The dynamics of marriage – and at times, the unfair pressures required from them – are reiterated, once again in Vives’ instructive text about relationships.

He states:

But as women are far more weaker than man, so they are far more meek and humble: therefore thou mayst bring them under and rule them other by manly power...for if the woman were robust and strong both of mind and body, how could she suffer to be obedient and subject to him that were no stronger than herself?...Who could keep such a bold piece at home, but that she would be abroad?...Is she neglect or little regard small things, how shall she keep the instruments of her house, the which are made of many small pieces?...A man wolde rather leave all and dwell in a dessert to dwell in such misery and bondage. (126)

Vives’ gendered concept of “meekness,” or humbled feminine silence, does not work out as he would predict when we apply his theories to Mariana. Ironically, her desire for Angelo results in her verbal insistence that they wed, and therefore, a surplus of discourse is produced from a woman who should remain silent. She verbalizes her current inability to fit within the marriage paradigm, discusses the trickery of her sexual encounter with Angelo, and justifies their marriage, “As there is sense in truth, and truth in virtue, / I am affianc’d this man’s wife, as strongly / As words could make up vows” (5.1.225-27). If Vives believes silence and meekness is the key to a happy husband, Mariana’s verbal blossoming can be correlated to the “misery and bondage” men feel within a “house” or domestic partnership.

He goes on to insinuate that men who cannot silence or contain their wives (i.e. women who are not home but “abroad”) possess a less *manly* character. Not only do females become physical ciphers – objectified as household “instruments” and reduced to “small

pieces” – but also their actions reflect a husbands’ ability to control his house. Within conduct literature, females must be domestically contained, but also *become* containers that store male reputation(s). The female mind/discourse is a subject squeezed into the boxes of wifhood (chastity, virginity, silence, etc.) which is why men might view women as limited sexed bodies, destined to be ruled by “manly power.”

Although Vives’ concepts of marriage and reputation are stricter on females, Karen Cunningham’s book, *Imaginary Betrayals*, offers a refreshing alternative to female behavior. She highlights the inconsistencies of masculine discourse, especially in trial scenes of early modern plays, to suggest that weakness of mind was not an innate feminine quality, but instead a characteristic constructed by men to ensure feminine submission. This allows us to conceive (as Luckyj does) that women existed beyond the designated roles portrayed in conduct literature. As Cunningham argues:

What counted as weak mindedness in early modern culture was often conventionally associated with women. In *The Homily on Marriage*, for example, which was read in church from 1562 onwards states, “The woman is a weak creature not endued with like strength and constancy of mind; therefore, they be the sooner disquieted, and they be the more prone to all weak affections and dispositions of mind, more than men be; and lighter they be, and more vain in their fantasies and opinions.” Although they evoke comparisons with representations of the female mind, men’s treason trials tend to reproduce weak-mindedness less as a sign of natural female inferiority ... than as a sign of failed masculinity. (86)

“Failed masculinity” is an accurate depiction of the Duke and the men who traverse through Vienna. Because of this “failure,” or repetitive exploitation of the female body, the only way women can remain chaste is to leave the nation (which perpetuates further social fragmentation). I am discussing this to show that Isabella’s choices set her apart from the other female characters in the play, and that she eventually inverts the standard/gendered meaning of silence and obedience to resist authority without breaking any “laws.” For example, Isabella does not live in a house or have a husband so Vives’ instructions are a moot

point for her; a husband that she does *not* have cannot tether her to objects that she does not own. Despite this, conduct literature does emphasize the fact that matrimony anchors men to land, and therefore men, in turn, anchor the female body. This second-hand-regulation-effect is why gendered bodies become targets for further pressures and societal fears. While the Duke is concerned with the regulation of male bodies to enforce justice, his methodology to achieve order is equally invested in the control of female bodies. Although Kate Keepdown, Mariana, and Juliet are wed we must ask the question: what justice does the Duke serve Isabella by proposing to her? She does not need corrective punishment. As a chaste virgin – and therefore, according to social ideology, the most respected female character<sup>7</sup> – she is neither dishonored, defamed, uneducated, ugly, etc., nor is she interested in “love,” susceptible to lust, or seeking marriage. The only motivation that Isabella seems to possess is to save her brother, and return to the enclosure of the nunnery. Isabella flips Foucault’s description of lenient punishment upside down because while Juliet and Mariana experience “confinement” as a source of shame and correction Isabella seeks it as an everyday lifestyle.

### Section 3:

#### That’s Somewhat Madly Spoken; Or, Isabella’s Distressing Double Discourse

I discussed the Duke’s use of marriage as an abusive tool to harm his subjects’, but now I will examine the male abuse of Isabella’s rhetoric to further justify her decision to disregard Viennese culture and ideology. The tongue is a highly regulated body part and source of fear within *Measure for Measure* because it straddles, yet merges, the boundaries of physical and discursive identity. It is impossible to discuss fears and power of the physical

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<sup>7</sup> Vives’ work again highlights the societal preference and reverence asserted toward virginity. He says, “How please and dear to everybody is a virgin? How reverend a thing even unto them that be ill and vicious themselves...Virginity was ever an holy thing even among thieves, breakers of sanctuary, ungracious livers, murderers, and also among wild beasts...Virginity hath so much marvelous honor in it that wild lions regard it.” (104)

tongue (body) without intertwining fears of subjective discourse (mind) as well. As mentioned previously, marriage was regulated through encouragement of gendered archetypes (the obedient, chaste, and silent woman); however, speech was a source of widespread distress because it was not as easy to categorize as female marital status.

The physical, objective tongue, and individual, subjective speech do not decisively represent power or weakness, yet both are tirelessly assessed and analyzed as agents of submission AND defiance in early modern conduct literature – as well as scholars writing about the early modern era. The contradicting opinions of silence and speech at the center of Christina Luckyj's analysis in *A Moving Rhetorike*, I believe, best capture the irresolvable phobias regarding control of early modern women. Luckyj argues that men of the patriarchy actually preferred excessive feminine language because it was a way to trap women in modes of compliance, such as providing responses like "I do" or "yes" or "what is your will." She also goes on to explain that silence was feared because it was a sign of potential subjectivity marked with alternate, hidden agendas, "And in early modern England, the greatest weapon in the patriarchal arsenal was the demand not for women's silence but for women's speech" (6). Yet, Lynda Boose's article, "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member," provides an intriguing counterargument to this when she suggests that the patriarchy in fact desires feminine silence: "What is striking is that the punishments meted out to women are much more frequently targeted at suppressing women's speech than they are at controlling their sexual transgressions" (184).

Why is silence shameful and unwelcome, as well as respected and necessary at the same time? Is silence a representation of feminine subjection, deviousness, or integrity? After thorough examination of conduct literature, I have found that there is no proper answer. The most validating explanation regarding the complexity of discourse is Foucault's dualistic comment that power is derived from the production of language (i.e. speech) as well as the

removal of language (i.e. silence). This means that power is connected to individual subjective will and physical mouth, thus bringing men and women to the same innate level, and undermining conditions of gender that associate females with silence and men with speech. Isabella's choice to take a vow of silence is a source of confusion for men, because men could not label it as "good" or "bad." For example, in Gouge's work, *Of Domestic Duties*, feminine rhetoric equates to mutiny, "silence on the one side implieth a reverend subjection, as on the other side too much speech implieth a usurpation of authoritie" (Gouge 282), but according to Vives, this same feminine speech is portrayed as a harmless non-entity "As for eloquence, I have no great care, nor a woman needeth not...in company to hold her tongue demurely" (Vives 101-02). I highlight cultural indecisiveness and anxiety about silence and speech because Isabella experiences reward and punishment for both; it is the fact that she *controls* her own silence and/or speech that define the indefinability of her power.

Isabella proves herself to be a fierce conversationalist and rhetorical opponent; however, it is telling that she voluntarily removes herself from Vienna to live as a nun, a life that forbids conversation with men and requires non-marital as well as physical chastity. In Jacobean theatre, gendered speech was often associated with gendered sexuality, linking the idea of a talkative woman to a sexually available woman. Therefore, Isabella's silence can be conceived as her own attempt to hinder masculine imaginings about her body through the opening of her mouth. Boose comments on the problematic conception about gendered speech in the early modern era, she argues:

For Tudor-Stuart England, in village and town, an obsessive energy was invested in exerting control over the unruly woman—the woman who was exercising either her sexuality or her tongue under her own control rather than under the rule of a man. As illogical as it may initially seem, the two crimes—being a scold and being a so-called whore—were frequently conflated. (195)

The moment Isabella's closed mouth opens to save her brother, she becomes sexually viable since discourse is conflated with intercourse, and since Viennese men are addicted to sex.

Especially for Angelo, Isabella's mouth becomes the physically accessible and penetrable bodily orifice that replaces her inaccessible vagina. As seen from conduct literature, a "silent" woman is a "chaste" woman, and because Isabella encapsulates both of those philosophies she is already "ruly" without need for male regulation. Therefore, as derived from Boose's statement, the only way Viennese men can justify the need to control Isabella's body is to bring her back into Vienna and coerce her into speaking, thus categorizing her as "unruly" and consequently, a sexual woman. Early modern women were viewed as either reprimanding shrews, loose in tongue and vagina, or obedient wives, tight-lipped and cross-legged. But, because Isabella embodies both the chaste body and the loose tongue, she contradicts those categories and forces audiences to rethink the validity of speech regulations (especially because she stops speaking to resist male control). Whereas men are socially conditioned to believe that a loquacious woman is a whore, yet still controllable, Isabella is a virgin who can practice verbosity and silence, yet prefers to live "alone."

Isabella's active choice to commit to a vow of silence at the opening of the play, and her resort to silence at the end of the play, I believe, are individual survival techniques to avoid hegemonic patriarchal formations including compulsory heterosexuality in the form of marriage and submission. Her silence is also a cause for masculine confusion and alarm because inside the nunnery she is *unmonitored*, existing in opposition to the marriage paradigm as well as gendered behaviors stated within conduct literature. I return to the work of Elizabeth Grosz to highlight the complexity of Isabella's indefinable sexuality, and to emphasize the fear it provokes in men as well as the futile efforts they take to regulate it.

Grosz says:

As a concept, sexuality is incapable of ready containment: it refuses to stay within its predesignated regions, for it seeps across boundaries into areas that are apparently not its own. As drive, it invests all sorts of other areas in the structures of desire. *It renders even the desire not to desire, or the desire for celibacy, as sexual; it leaks into apparently nondrive-related activities through what Freud described as*



*sublimation, making any activity a mode of its own seeking of satisfaction.* As a set of activities and practices, it refuses to accept the containment of the bedroom or to restrict itself to only those activities which prepare for orgasmic pleasure. (*italics mine*, viii)

Grosz's expansive interpretation of sexuality exists in total opposition with the limitations of the early modern marriage paradigm and breaks through the linguistic sexuality mentioned in Boose's work. However, her claim that sexuality is a dynamic, uncontainable, experience justifies why the patriarchy goes to such great lengths to contain women.

This is paramount to this argument because it proves that female agency, subjectivity, and concepts of pleasure can exceed social compartments created by men. Additionally, it acknowledges the fact that Isabella's virginity is so valuable because the patriarchy deems it important. If Isabella's virginity is considered through a different ideology, her empowerment can be derived not from bodily state but from her own desire to be chaste. According to Grosz, it's Isabella's ability to use, or not use, sexual activity that makes her chastity sexual. From this new lens, sexuality exists not only in terms of what men find attractive, but also from any human experience or logos that provokes feelings of satisfaction. Isabella's independent decisions in the nunnery make her sexuality, and virginity, more frightening than the other characters forced into marriage or whoredom because she is in control of who has access to her body.

In an article entitled, "Isabella's Order: Religious Acts and Personal Desires" by Jessica Slights and Michael Holmes, the Clarist order is recognized as a community of rebellion, not likely to obey patriarchal rules and regulations. Their article importantly suggests that nunneries, or spaces of silence, allowed women to escape patriarchal surveillance including ideological expectations which demonstrates that "Isabella's religious devotion actually allows her to resist pressures to marry" (264), and alternatively focus on her own independent, feminine desires. It is not my intention to imply that Isabella's rejection of

the patriarchy is a sign of her feminine sexual preference.<sup>8</sup> Instead, I lean on the ideas of Slights and Holmes to highlight that a nunnery was not a “predesignated region” of heterosexuality, and thus dismantles the need for “normal” patriarchal systems.

Since nunneries created gendered communities that increased the opportunity for female bonds, they also provided women an acceptable method of living outside the rules of heterosexual relationships. Lucio and Claudio’s operation to extract Isabella and reinsert her back into the community addresses the early modern priority to sustain a hetero-normal culture, “Early modern people were acutely aware that ideological systems and social structures are susceptible to fragmentation and change. Gaps between individual desires and official norms frequently lead to disturbance of cultural and political values” (Slights and Holmes 273). Not only do Slights and Holmes suggest that nunneries delegitimize the relevance of structured social hierarchies, but that they also weaken a woman’s need to participate in an oppressive system. From this perspective, Isabella’s regulation is of utmost importance because she represents an entire gender that could one day rebel against marriage and motherhood and potentially destroy the longevity of England.

As a nun invested in serving god, the highest power of all, Isabella is not bound to obey the political demands of the sovereign or follow cultural wifely duties. Instead, her inclusion in piety “deciphers normative ethics, showing that juridical categories of being and nothingness, innocence and guilt, are culturally constructed tools necessary for social ordering and exploitation” (280). This point is also essential because it acknowledges the fact that female social roles (and thus the laws/conduct literature defining them) are not innate

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<sup>8</sup>In *What You Will: Gender, Contract, and Shakespearean Social Space*, Kathryn Schwarz designates Isabella as a “queer virgin,” not to emphasize her homoerotic sexuality, but instead to form a concept of sexuality (chastity) that exists beyond heterosexual/patriarchal domination. She says, “Isabella however, in accepting the name of one type of not-woman—queen virgin—has wrested both the power of choice and the power of defining, or categorizing herself away from men. Only by being a queer virgin can she challenge the sexual economy by creating a category of autonomous female who has the power to resist both Angelo’s illegal—at the Duke’s legal—proposals of sexual servitude.” (171)

statues, but instead social fabrications created by men to ensure that other men administer dominance over women. When Slights and Holmes' ideas about nunneries are read with Luckyj's dualism of silence and power versus discourse and institutional constraints, the context of a woman-centered social environment (i.e. space of silence) operates as Luckyj's "less highly regulated space" that is insusceptible to "insidious" male linguistics and jurisdiction.

When the nunnery shields Isabella's voice/body, it allows her to slip through the loopholes of masculine society and avoid "social ordering and exploitation" to solidify her own freedom. Her actions insinuate that she is aware "disappearing," or removing her body from Vienna, is the best way to achieve autonomy, escape physical abuse, and defy gendered social categories of the time. Furthermore, it signifies that she is a woman who refuses to be placed into the conventional, domestic lifestyle created for women. Because she does not aspire or consent to be a wife (making motherhood/widowhood impossible) and can never truthfully be deemed a whore (as her virginity remains intact), she confuses the social system that requires men to control sexualized bodies, and destabilizes the social measurements men use to determine feminine "worth" and "desire."

Although her coveted virginity gives her leverage in the patriarchy of Vienna, it is also her downfall because it generates an intensified, masculine need to control her and place her somewhere in the marriage paradigm (into a woman men can understand and manipulate). It is interesting to see how Isabella's rare combination of physical beauty and celibacy unsettle men. Angelo and Lucio try to reduce her from saintly virgin to that of a whore by employing degrading commands such as "You must lay down the treasures of your body" (2.4.96), and "Kneel down before him, hang upon his gown" (2.2.43), and the Duke attempts to transition her from autonomous nun to ruled bride, "Give me your hand and say you will be mine" (5.1.490). Yet, because Isabella does not obey any of those orders, she

remains outside male authority and continues to exist as a source of fear and uncertainty. This is especially evident when Isabella's lifestyle is read in parallel to Jonathon Swetnam's misogynistic work, "The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women" which describes his version of co-dependent, early modern women. "Men, I say, may live without women, but women cannot live without men" (200). Isabella's avoidance of the patriarchy is correlated to her successful life without the opposite sex – thus rendering masculine rule unnecessary, Swetnam's idea a moot point, and silence an essential key to female authenticity.

Initially, Isabella loses agency when she interacts with men in Vienna – who misinterpret or misuse her words for their own advantages. Similar to Foucault's explanation that power is derived from both production and repression of language, Judith Butler's *Excitable Speech* explains that, "If language can sustain the body, it can also threaten its existence" (5). Foucault and Butler bring forth the social reality that positive or negative effects of speech have equal benefits or harms upon the body. Their claims help unpack Isabella's destined verbal failure in Vienna. (When I say "failure," I do not mean that her words are ineffective or nonsensical, but instead that her powerful discourse can always be reduced to the consequence of her innate beauty and unintended eroticism). Similar to the way that the Duke's body is an extension of the law, Isabella's voice is more complexly an extension of her inescapable femininity.

Isabella's passionate speech is the site that gives men the opportunity to admire her bodily form, igniting lust within Angelo and the Duke. Therefore, feminine voice in *Measure for Measure* is inevitably designated as a seductive source or "as a discursive effect, not a pre-discursive fact" (Enterline 19). This suggests that Isabella's persuasive tact is not the most important part of her rhetorical arguments, instead the male focus is on the physical delivery of her words which provoke masculine desire and pigeonhole her body into a state of

inadvertent sexualization; language is less about Isabella's intention to do good and more about the way men misinterpret her speech to satiate their own desires. Butler highlights the concept that speech eliminates private, individual possession, and leaves the speaker vulnerable to misinterpretations of other people. She reiterates Feldman's concept of the speech act to prove her point: "the act of a speaking body, is always to some extent unknowing about what it performs, that it always says something that it does not intend, and that it is not the emblem of mastery or control that it sometimes purports to be" (Butler 10). Although Isabella demonstrates mastery of common sense – she uses language with bravado to fight for her brother and protect her honor – her words are interpreted as an opportunity for eventual sexual intercourse and repurposed in ways that she never intends (i.e. when she confesses to a sexual act that she does not actually commit, it solidifies her victimization and categorization as a whore).

Similar to the way that Juliet is defined through her pregnant belly, Isabella is defined through her beautiful face and speech (but under the pretense of compliments, not shame). Although Isabella's discourse is construed and sexualized by men, it is also their masculine language of praise and seeming admiration that equally lock her into exploitation; their words are spoken with the intent to reduce Isabella to a whore, not to elevate her onto a respected pedestal. According to Claire Preston, poets utilize the concept of the *blason* to descriptively list feminine body parts while comparing them to "extravagant" items such as fruit or flowers, etc. (14), her issue with this comparative language is that it proves to actually praise the creative "skills" of poets more than it celebrates true love for one woman. Preston further describes that the *blasonneur* constructs a picture universe, or a mimetic experience of a woman, which in actuality diminishes and disperses the target of inspiration from a holistic figure to separate body parts. She says, "the visualized woman of a blason can never be seen in the round, only as a collection of separate, discrete elements whose aggregation is

contingent not upon the autonomous object but rather upon the will of the describing poet” (15). The men of Vienna are certainly not poetic; however, they employ the blason in order to ensure that Isabella’s body, and most importantly, her virginity, remain at the forefront of discussion.

Throughout the course of the play, Isabella is never referred to as “Isabella;” instead, her introductions are preceded (and therefore linguistically recognizable) by her virginal status or her relationship to other people. Even semantically Isabella loses all emotional autonomy and is tied to her physical parts/maidenhood inside Vienna: “Here is the sister of the man condem’d” (2.2.17), “a very virtuous maid” (20), “One Isabel, a sister, desires access to you” (2.4.18), “the tongue of Isabel” (4.3.106), “hail virgin, if you be—as those cheek-roses / proclaim you are no less” (1.1.16-17). Lucio’s use of the blason (cheek-roses) is not mentioned to compliment her beauty, but rather to emphasize the freshness and inexperience her virginity represents. And furthermore, despite the fact that he deems her immortal because she is “pure,” he also negates his own compliment when he explains that he deceives virgins for his own pleasure, “With maids to seem the lapwing, and to jest tongue far from heart, play with all virgins so” (1.4.32-33). His words are insincere gestures that do not benefit Isabella at all – especially because she does not want to be a wife, and does not succumb to flattery. As far as the audience knows she is concerned with a life of “strict restraint” (1.4.4).

As expressed earlier, the men of Vienna are swift to resort to physical exploitation, and even Isabella’s own brother uses her persuasive speech as a diversion to gain access to her body, and bait and hook Angelo. He says,

Implore her, in my voice, that she makes friends,  
 To the strict deputy: bid herself assay him...  
 For in her youth there is a prone and speechless dialect,  
 Such as move men; beside, she hath that prosperous art,  
 When she will play with reason and discourse,  
 And well she can persuade. (1.2.170-76)

Claudio's first inclination is to exploit his sister physically, and reason and discourse prove to be ineffective coming from a "speechless" mouth. Suddenly the "art" of her "prone" language is inseparable from the image of her horizontal body which might provoke eroticized fantasizes of physical intercourse. Claudio knows that Isabella's youthful, physical charms might soften the rigid Angelo, and her "chastity" would be most appealing to his strict personality. But more importantly, Isabella's verbal power is what makes her, in Angelo's eyes, sexually available to him. After their first interaction Angelo is irrationally consumed by his lust, he says:

Dost thou desire her foully for those things,  
That make her good? ... What, do I love her,  
That I desire to hear her speak again?  
And feast upon her eyes? ... Never could the strumpet,  
With all her double vigor, art and nature,  
Once stir my temper: but this virtuous maid,  
Subdues me quite. (2.2.174-75; 178-79; 183-86)

Isabella's virginity is a contributing factor in his seduction, but the "good" intentions produced from her opening and closing mouth ignites the sudden need to dominate her.

Ironically, Angelo is seduced by Isabella after she criticizes his reasoning for punishment and insults his temporary leadership. She says "If he [Claudio] had been as you, and you as he, you would have slipp'd like him, but he like you / Would never have been so stern" (2.2.64-65), and then, "But man, proud man, / Dress'd in a little brief authority, / Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd—his glassy essence—like an angry ape / Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven" (118-21). In a few lines Isabella manages to discredit Angelo's position of authority as well as his character. She highlights the fact that he is not a true leader, but instead a liar hiding behind power of "little brief authority" to feel important. She further emphasizes his political and emotional shallowness implying that his cruelty and inexperience is transparent and frail as glass, or as underdeveloped as an animal. The fact that she refers to his death sentence as a "choleric word" and "flat blasphemy,"

proves she is not afraid to speak the truth, but also that her logic leaves little room for argument. Angelo acknowledges her case, yet still manages to sexualize her words anyway, “She speaks, and tis’ such sense / That my sense breeds with it” (142-43). Isabella’s obvious disapproval of Angelo as a leader, and a man, does not inspire him to change his behavior, but instead increases his desire to sensually “breed” with a woman who thinks he’s disgraceful. Here, Butler’s use of Feldman’s speech act is particularly useful. Isabella’s “speaking body” certainly had no intention of seducing Angelo, but her language is weakened and transformed when faced against the drive of his own sexual longing. Suddenly, Isabella’s body becomes the most important commodity, and therefore pushes the artistry of her discourse to a space of inattention. Similar to Boose’s ideas, Luckyj further describes the dangers of gendered speech:

As soon as woman uses language, she can be defined and controlled ... a woman who speaks in early modern culture can hardly be described as an independent being, if in speaking she enters male discourse only to be simultaneously labeled a whore. Lisa Jardine notes that ‘Both gossiping and scolding give [the Renaissance wife] a semblance of power, which threatens disorder without actually freeing her from multiple obligations and constraints.’ And in early modern England...the greatest weapon in the patriarchal arsenal was the demand not for women’s silence but for women’s speech. (6)

True to Luckyj’s theory, Isabella loses her autonomy the moment she returns to Vienna. And at the end of her first conversation with Angelo, he says “Come again tomorrow” (145) which shows she now must play by his rules and return to his territory. After one conversation, she transitions from freedom, or anonymity in the nunnery, to conformity, or a relationship with authority. Isabella “enters male discourse” the moment she tries to defend her brother, and is subjectively pimped by Claudio, Lucio, and the Duke. Despite this, her dependence upon others is not derived from her own active choice, but rather from her familial obligation to save her only living family member. Ironically, from the get-go, Isabella has no desire to participate in whatever ruse is proposed to her –“make me not your story” (1.1.29) she says to



Lucio – yet the men of Vienna manipulatively monopolize on her connection to her brother and use her “moving graces” (36) for their benefits: Claudio needs her mouth/body to save his life, the Duke needs her voice/body to claim she had sex with Angelo, and Lucio relies on her persuasion to seduce Angelo.

While the Viennese men are drawn to Isabella’s beauty, Swetnam warns men to be weary of it, “For women are cunning dissemblers; their beauty is always matched with hellish thoughts...[Women are] subtle and dangerous for men to deal with, for their faces are lures, their beauties are baits, their looks are nets, and their words are charms, and all bring men to ruin” (Ibid 195). As seen from Angelo’s first reaction to Isabella, Swetnam’s statement cannot be denied. Isabella’s beauty of fervent speech is the catalyst for Angelo’s lust, fantasies, and ultimate unraveling. However, Swetnam’s warnings do not work within the context of this play because it is the men who force Isabella out of her silent sanctuary and bring her into the city, initiating their own demise, and highlighting their own masculine evils. Although Isabella speaks out of her own convictions, we know she was coerced to talk to men, by a man, in order to save a man. It is ironic and tyrannous that they try to punish the exception to their own enforced rule especially when they use her body as a pawn to create lust, provide distraction, and feign protection over other men. And furthermore, despite Swetnam’s warnings of physical beauty, Lucio, Angelo, and the Duke employ (not avoid) the blason in order to sexualize Isabella (thus running toward their “own ruin”), and furthermore, prompt her to speak so they can fortify their power by eventually forcing her to be quiet.

Isabella does possess the ability to speak daggers, especially when her reputation or chastity is in jeopardy. Her strong use of language and its potential to damage her brother as well as Angelo’s reputations are an understandable source of fear. Carla Mazzio’s essay, “Sins of the Tongue,” explains that the tongue operates as both an active and inactive power – a subjective and objective dynamic experience. The challenge of speech is that it must be

“contained” to stop any expressions of defiance, yet if it is contained to the point that it becomes inactive, it no longer needs to be monitored. The men of Vienna require Isabella’s defiance (or in their eyes, disloyalty) of the patriarchy so they can perpetuate their need to punish or rule her. Isabella’s words prove to be a doubled site of fear because she is an emblem of pure silence, but also a master of words that pinpoint their corruption. Mazzio writes:

Early modern fantasies about the tongue often suggest a nervousness about its apparent agency. This is, in part, because of the deconstructive potential of the member. As the one organ that can move in and out of the body, its symbolic position in a range of discourses lies on the threshold between the framed and the unframed, between the space of the self and the space of the other...The Fantasies of the tongue’s mobility were often explicitly linked to disturbances of social and political order. The capacities of the organ as a vehicle, as that which exists to carry and transport, led to its multiple personifications as porters, midwives, footmen, trumpeters, horses, and women, all roles that emphasized the tongue’s ordained position to serve the higher-ups. But the “orderly” was always potentially disorderly. (57-58)

Mazzio’s discussion of female speech as freedom or “disorder” is the same as Slights and Holmes argument that Isabella’s voluntary lifestyle (as a nun) is a direct resistance to “coercive authority” (272). When Angelo tries to pardon Claudio in exchange for Isabella’s sexual favors, she goes berserk. Abruptly, her deployed speech transcends “disorder” and becomes pure hatred:

Ha! Little honor to be much believed,  
And most pernicious purpose. Seeming, seeming!  
I will proclaim thee, Angelo, look for’t!  
Sign me a present pardon for my brother,  
Or with an outstretched throat I’ll tell the world aloud,  
What a man thou art.” (2.4.148-53)

Isabella’s response is crucial in light of the plays interests in masculine exploitation of the female body, but also in light of its critique of masculine tyranny and abuse of power. Within a few lines she completely takes control over the semantic tempo, inverting the hierarchies of gender and authority. In this speech the audience hears how a woman overpowers a man occupying the highest position of power (technically), but also fearlessly threatens to expose

his private artifice in a very public way. It is significant that she uses the image “outstretched throat” because she monopolizes on a part of her own unexploited body to mock Angelo’s failed attempt at exploitation. And from this point of view, she also inverts the framework of the blason. Whereas men previously verbalized feminine beauty to highlight their own discursive power via patronizing platitudes, Isabella now transforms her body part from diminished image to Mazzio’s threatening, source of disorder. Isabella’s throat surpasses corporeal container and becomes the empowering physical *vehicle* delivering the demise of a man who equally praises and exploits her. Secondly, “outstretched throat” amplifies the concept of a defiant, forceful, physical body. Isabella’s voice will not only deliver the unmasking of a dishonorable man, but will also project outward in “outstretched” expansive energy, filled with the audible promise that Angelo’s indiscretions will be heard “aloud” by all occupants of Vienna.

After her threat of exposure and after Angelo thinks they have had sex, he is the most fearful of her words. He hopes that Isabella’s shame will outweigh her bravery to utter the truth, and he tries to convince himself that his power will render her words illegitimate.

This deed unshapes me quite; makes me unpregnant,  
 And dull to proceedings,  
 A deflower’d maid, and by an eminent body, that enforc’d,  
 The law against it! But that her tender shame,  
 Will not proclaim against her maiden loss,  
 How might she tongue me! (4.4.18-23)

“Unshapes” insinuates that Angelo is fearfully thrown off center and stripped of the filled wisdom and pride he possessed in the first act. Now Isabella’s tongue is not a sign of compliance, but instead a source of slanderous destruction. She has the power to ruin his reputation, and potentially destroy his future marketability with other women, including marriage and the extension of his own bloodline which make him feel “unpregnant” or for lack of better words, extinct. (Additionally, the word “unpregnant” is a reminder that Angelo was never fit to rule, especially since Escalus is “pregnant” with wisdom and knowledge).

Isabella once again displays her agency through combative argument when Claudio begs her to sacrifice her virginity. Before his request, Isabella makes a promise to herself that she will remain a virgin, even if her brother must die. Also, she makes it repeatedly clear that she could never live a shamed life (like Juliet) since she considers her chastity her most prized possession, “I had rather my brother die by the law, than my son should be unlawfully born” (3.1.179-80). It is interesting that Shakespeare writes the sequence of events this way; Claudio pleads for his life even though the audience already knows his sister will refuse him, which only further emphasizes the male social reliance upon the female body. Claudio’s fate lies in her hands and the fact that Isabella is unwilling to change her mind and prioritize her physical honor before his life, proves her shift to the power position. It also gives her the chance to further exercise her verbal muscular power (before she becomes eternally silent in the nunnery). Isabella explodes into another fit of rage when Claudio asks her to get physical with Angelo. Her intense anger might insinuate feelings of betrayal, but it is her disorderly insults that take center stage:

O you beast,  
 O faithless coward, O dishonest wretch!  
 Wilt thou be made a man out of my vice?  
 Is't not a kind of incest, to take life,  
 From thine own sister's shame? What should I think?  
 Heaven shield my mother played my father fair,  
 For such warped slip of wilderness,  
 Ne'er issues from his blood. Take my defiance,  
 Die, perish! Might but my bending down,  
 Relieve thee from thy fate, it should proceed,  
 I'll pray a thousand prayers for thy death,  
 No word to save thee. (3.1.136-45)

When she first hears of Claudio’s imprisonment and scheduled death she is eager to help him get married. Now, she tells him to die (twice!) and literally refuses to hear anything else he has to say. Her speech ultimately reveals a devotion to her own chastity and loyalty to her own pure reputation. Despite the fact that men once dragged her into Vienna, now Isabella makes it perfectly clear that she intends to drag herself out. The fact that Claudio would allow

his sister to fight his battles and/or sacrifice her virginity in his name transfers his honor to Isabella. This power shift is once again reflected in her language, as her words are plump with profanities, drip with disdain, leave no room for remorse, and represent the polar opposite of a woman who practices silence and obedience.

What's more interesting is Isabella's rhetorical revelation at the end of the passage. She admits that she will resort to silence and will avoid defending him again. Additionally, it's ironic that she claims to pray for him (a selfless thing to be shared with God) because it is an action to be completed in silence – something that eliminates reactions/responses from other men as no one can hear her thoughts – and because it sets a precedent for how she uses silence as a protest. This is a smart tactic as she hopes for her brother's death. It is further ironical that a nun would wish for the elimination of her only family, but it proves that nunneries were places of rebellion because they produced and housed a woman who is capable of vengeance and limited forgiveness (272). Although Isabella cuts her family ties as well as her spiritual vow of silence she does not seem to regret her decisions. Instead, she discloses her choice to employ silence as a means of resistance, comeuppance, and self-satisfaction. If Isabella is silent, then Claudio will die, which (in this case) is exactly what she wants. After this first declaration of silence, it should come as no surprise that she does not respond to the Duke when he asks for her hand.

Isabella's verbal prowess doesn't last forever. Her public confession is the height of her humiliation because it destroys everything that she holds most sacred: chastity, honesty, and her vow for celibacy and silence. Despite the fact that Isabella holds up her end of the bed trick bargain, she must publicly acknowledge the fornication that she didn't commit, and sacrifice her still intact virginity through language that she is forced to speak, Isabella says:

(For this was of much length)—the vile conclusion,  
 I now begin with grief and shame to utter.  
 He would not, but by gift of my chaste body,  
 To his concupiscible intemperate lust,

Release my brother; and after much debatement,  
 My sisterly remorse confutes mine honor,  
 And I did yield to him. (5.1.98-104)

Isabella must engage in verbal dishonesty two times, first telling Angelo that she agrees to have sex, and then pretending – in front of the Viennese people – that she actually participated in sex outside of wedlock. Moreover, it is the Duke’s public defamation and reduction of her true words to illegitimate semantics that once again emphasize his tyranny and his propensity to serve torture mercilessly. Technically the only “crime” Isabella commits is the one the Duke asks her to participate in (and once again, he contradicts his own earlier words when he “confesses” to the Friar he could never hold others responsible for his misdeeds). Despite the fact that Isabella agrees to the plan to help Mariana, we know these sexual conversations bring her great shame because she has already verbalized that she considers a ruined reputation (which includes pre-marital sex) worse than death. When the Duke inquires if Isabella planned the bed-trick, her obligation to relive the discussion is filled with sexualization and her own discomfort.

That makes his opening with this bigger key.  
 This other doth command a little door  
 Which from the vineyard to the garden leads;  
 There I have made my promise  
 Upon the heavy middle of the night  
 To call upon him... With whispering and most guilty diligence,  
 In action all of precept, he did show me  
 The way twice o’er.” (4.1.31-35; 39-41)

The words “guilty” and “whispering” indicate that Isabella still experiences shame even when she repeats the conversation. Compared to the impact of her previous language and the strength of her outstretched throat, it is evident that she has retreated to a new place of insecurity and loss of control. Her suddenly meek voice is a manifestation of her obligation to follow someone else’s plans (and her quieted tones and acquiescence are a first taste of what marriage life might be like). Furthermore, the fact that Angelo makes the unnecessary effort to show her the directions twice demonstrates his enthusiasm about their planned sexual

rendezvous. Yet, it also serves as a double dose of shame for Isabella because his excitement emphasizes a reversal of power. Isabella's physical loss is now Angelo's egotistical gain – as well as his physical pleasure. Without the power of her physical chastity, Isabella's body is forever marked and remembered by one sexual interlude (which reminds us of the perpetually groaning Juliet, or Pompey's comment about Mistress Elbow that “there was nothing done to her once” [2.1.140]).

The Duke leans upon guilt and coercion to get Isabella to cooperate, and he manages to tie her to wifely duties without actually making her a wife. When the Duke presents his plan to Isabella, the pressure and responsibility to succeed is put upon her. “It is a rupture that you may easily heal...Go to Angelo; answer his requiring with a plausible obedience; agree with his demands to the point...It lies so much in your holding up. Haste you speedily to Angelo; ...give him promise of satisfaction” (2.1.235-37; 262; 265). Not only must she exude plausible obedience like a wife, but she must be agreeable and satisfying, like a prostitute prioritizing the needs of others above her own. Additionally, because the Duke is disguised as a friar, he monopolizes on the fact that a novice will be more prone to follow his ordained word, and jump on the opportunity to do “good,” or “heal,” a bad situation. He presents the bed-trick from an idealistic viewpoint, describing the intricacies of his plan without fear of negative ramifications. Through the bed-trick, Isabella can keep her reputation intact (which is why she goes through with the plot), right the wronged Mariana, save her brother, and please the Duke. Regardless of her ability to make things right, the Duke needs her (more than she needs him) to comply because it is her body that is the object of desire. The Duke is aware of her vital role when he says, “it lies so much in your holding up” (2.1.262), which is one of the only honest things he says because if Isabella was still in the nunnery his plan would be impossible.

The moment Isabella admits that she “yields” to Angelo, she is deemed a whore. And after this, both the Duke and Angelo repeatedly speak to her like she doesn’t matter, proving that the “truth” is a privilege only applicable for those who sit in a respectable position. The Duke further punishes Isabella by allowing her to think that her brother is dead when he is still alive. This withholding of information demonstrates his cruelty, but also the fact that he is comfortable lying to keep Isabella in a state of confusion and dismay until he is certain he can trap others, or appear as the hero, “It is the tongue of Isabel. She comes to know / If yet her brother’s pardon be come hither; / But I will keep her ignorant of her good...” (4.3.106-08). He punishes other people for lying when he is the biggest perpetrator of deceit.

The Duke’s control of words, and furthermore, his disregard for the performative of others, is tyrannical manipulation of political power, or what Butler describes as hate speech. She says, “The power attributed to hate speech is a power of absolute and efficacious agency ... the problem, then, is not that the force of the sovereign performative is wrong, but when used by citizens it is wrong, and when intervened upon by the state, it is, in these contexts, right” (77). When Butler’s theory is applied to Vienna, it emphasizes the fact that the Duke cannot be held responsible for all the negative language used throughout the nation, as people have control over what they say; however, the Duke’s tendency to shift the concepts of wrong and right, true and false, and then inflict punishments based on his shifting conveniences is what deems him a tyrant.

Isabella tries so hard to plead her innocence and achieve a sense of justice from the authority, “Hear me! O hear me, hear!” (34). Although she shouts out the truth, describing Angelo’s misdeeds and the injustices against her, her requests are returned with aloofness and dishonesty. The torturous aspect goes beyond her sexualized public confession when the men publically deem her a crazy woman, questioning the state of her mind and reasoning – which are her strongest personality traits – “My lord, her wits I fear me are not firm” (35), “That’s



somewhat madly spoken” (91), “fond wretch, thou know’st not what thou speak’st” (107-08). Once the Duke inverts the truth (and proposes the lie that Angelo is a man of integrity), Isabella gives up her argument and agrees to go to prison, finally realizing that her attempts at vindication are futile because authentic words prove to be worthless tools in a city that refuses to acknowledge truth.

I do not want to promote the idea that silence is the solution to all interpersonal conflict, or that eloquence is a definitive gateway to female exploitation. It is not my intention to reiterate or reinforce a polarized concept of gender. Instead, I aim to stress that the crux of Isabella’s power is her ability to employ silence as a supplementary, tactical form of speech to resist tyranny. Silence proves to be more productive than the “truth” expressed through language, since speech is a concept controlled by the Duke. However, despite its effectiveness, withholding discourse must be a difficult change of action for Isabella especially in the face of injustice, or as Margaret Rieffer explains in her article “Instruments of Some More Mightier Member’: The Constriction of Female Power in *Measure for Measure*,” “A woman in [Isabella’s] her position would not make such a decision of silence without being absolutely positive it was necessary. Isabella realizes that her ‘prosperous art,’ her ability to ‘play with reason and discourse’ (I.ii.184-85), would be wasted in the city” (Rieffer 162), and Angelo confirms this earlier on when he says “you but waste your words” (2.2.72) after her valiant attempt to save Claudio.

I want to conclude by pointing out that Isabella destroys the opportunity of marriage for the Duke. When Isabella does not respond to his repeated proposals the audience once again experiences another interesting power reversal: whereas she had to once beg for Claudio’s life (which was pardoned), the Duke must now beg (I interpret his three repeated inquiries as begging) for her hand. “Dear Isabel / I have a motion much imports your good; / Whereto if you’ll a willing ear incline, / What’s mine is yours, and what is yours in mine”

(5.1.531-34). To me, the Duke is uncharacteristically tentative in his last proposal. While he employs unforgiving rhetoric against Angelo and Lucio (and even Juliet), now his language softens and his offer is presented as a true partnership, giving another person mutual access to everything he owns. Isabella is not keen to invest more time in the conversation. Because the Duke never receives her answer, his husbandry – and lets assume his narcissism – is destroyed. As the only virgin, and therefore the most “respectable” woman in the play, the Duke has everything to gain from a partnership with Isabella and everything to lose since there are no other women to marry.

If we acknowledge the fact that a man’s ability to rule his wife is equated to a king’s ability to rule his nation, it is plausible to assume that the Duke will remain an incapable sovereign until he finds a consenting partner. As an unwed leader, the Duke’s credibility is lost because he cannot rely on Isabella’s body to bear the continuation of his family. Mysterious silence allows this heroine to slip through the cracks of social authority and regain control of her once lost subjectivity. By refusing to speak, Isabella exemplifies the difference between being silenced and employing silence as *strategy*, and solidifies her defiance toward early modern rhetorical obedience (or the verbal consent that finalizes a marriage contract).<sup>9</sup> By choosing NOT to say “yes” or “I do,” she skirts the chance of future male control, refuses the role of wife, and also creates a space of her own rhetorical freedom. Additionally, I believe she does not say “no” either so she can avoid or eliminate any risk of rhetorical misinterpretation. It is within this silent space where she is not weakened by a sense of familial obligations or responsibility. And in a way, Isabella’s silence allows her to recede into her own individualized convent, a private linguistic sanctuary that does not

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<sup>9</sup> *The Laws Resolutions*, explains that “The full contract of matrimony is when it is made by words *de praesenti* [in the present tense] in a lawful consent, and thus two be made man and wife existing without lying together. Yet matrimony is not accounted consummated until there go with the consent of mind and conjunction of body.” (34, *Book II Of Coming to marriage*)

require communication with corrupt men. The Duke's proposal weakens his authoritative position because his title, manliness, and eligibility are measured, and dependent on Isabella's response. Thus, her silence further denies the Duke a chance to reassert himself back into Vienna. Without Isabella's consent his physical body will remain in exile, or as Baine puts it, "Isabella's sexual renunciation, a form of self-castration, would thus, if perpetuated, constitute a form of castrations for the Duke as well" (299), and lastly, she ensures that his political future will be vulnerable and unsteady at best. Isabella successfully dismantles the social structure in play because she chooses not to be a part of it, rendering men who depend on her participation, powerless.

Shakespeare's tragi-comedic problem play reveals the absolute compliance and total resistance speech ignites within patriarchal frameworks. Because Isabella defies gendered requirements regarding discourse and sexuality (she is verbal yet chaste; silent yet disobedient) she exposes formulaic flaws of social etiquette, and undercuts the men who exalt feminine silence yet foolishly underestimate its potential for rebellion. Furthermore, she exposes the tyrannical environment that conditions dishonorable men to be coercive and torturous, revealing that speech is the gateway to appropriation of both feminine physical space and emotional livelihood. But she also shows us that silence is a powerful tool that can rebuild corporeal autonomy and activate male exclusion. Isabella's silence equally represents her own subjectivity as well as the Duke's failed power, proving he will never be able to sustain the popularity he so desperately seeks. It is her lack of verbal enthusiasm that guarantees the Duke's relationship with his people is rooted in disobedience; which is also a mark of his own punishment since he measures his authenticity and power on the behavior of his subjects. Because of this, Isabella hinders the entire play from wrapping up successfully. Whereas comedies usually end in a tidy series of conventional marriages, *Measure for Measure* remains stuck in a liminal space of uncertainty. Although this is unproductive for

patriarchic audiences who expect “completion,” it does, however, place Isabella on a trajectory of mysterious timelessness – insinuating that her body and voice are irrecoverable, yet never seize to move or finish.

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